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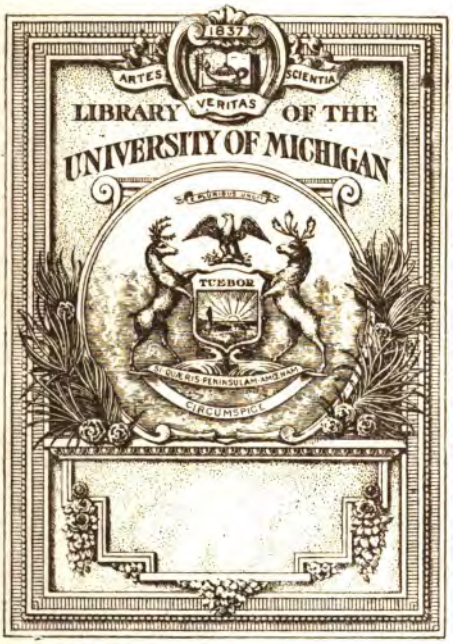
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THE HOME OF THE ELK.

Hunting Trips on the Prairie and in the Mountains

By

Theodore Roosevelt

Author of "American Ideals," "The Wilderness Hunter," "The Winning of the West," etc.

"Hunting Trips of a Ranchman"

Part II.

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PART II

CHAPTER I

A TRIP ON THE PRAIRIE

NO antelope are found, except rarely, immediately round my ranch-house, where the ground is much too broken to suit them; but on the great prairies, ten or fifteen miles off, they are plentiful, though far from as abundant as they were a few years ago when the cattle were first driven into the land. By plainsmen they are called either prong-horn or antelope, but are most often known by the latter and much less descriptive title. Where they are found they are always very conspicuous figures in the landscape; for, far from attempting to conceal itself, an antelope really seems anxious to take up a prominent position, caring only to be able to itself see its foes. It is the smallest in size of the plains game, even

smaller than a white-tail deer; and its hide is valueless, being thin and porous, and making very poor buckskin. In its whole appearance and structure it is a most singular creature. Unlike all other hollow-horned animals, it sheds its horns annually, exactly as the deer shed their solid antlers; but the shedding process in the prong-horn occupies but a very few days, so short a time, indeed, that many hunters stoutly deny that it takes place at all. The hair is of remarkable texture, very long, coarse, and brittle; in the spring it comes off in handfuls. In strong contrast to the reddish yellow of the other parts of the body, the rump is pure white, and when alarmed or irritated every hair in the white patch bristles up on end, greatly increasing the apparent area of the color. The flesh, unlike that of any other plains animal, is equally good all through the year. In the fall it is hardly so juicy as deer venison, but in the spring, when no other kind of game is worth eating, it is perfectly good; and at that time of the year, if we have to

get fresh meat, we would rather kill antelope than any thing else; and as the bucks are always to be instantly distinguished from the does by their large horns, we confine ourselves to them, and so work no harm to the species.

The antelope is a queer-looking rather than a beautiful animal. The curious pronged horns, great bulging eyes, and strange bridle-like marks and bands on the face and throat are more striking, but less handsome, than the delicate head and branching antlers of a deer; and it entirely lacks the latter animal's grace of movement. In its form and look, when standing still, it is rather angular and goat-like, and its movements merely have the charm that comes from lightness, speed, and agility. Its gait is singularly regular and even, without any of the bounding, rolling movement of a deer; and it is, consequently, very easy to hit running, compared with other kinds of game.

Antelope possess a most morbid curiosity. The appearance of any thing out of the way,

or to which they are not accustomed, often seems to drive them nearly beside themselves with mingled fright and desire to know what it is, a combination of feelings that throws them into a perfect panic, during whose continuance they will at times seem utterly unable to take care of themselves. In very remote, wild places, to which no white man often penetrates, the appearance of a white-topped wagon will be enough to excite this feeling in the prong-horn, and in such cases it is not unusual for a herd to come up and circle round the strange object heedless of rifle-shots. This curiosity is particularly strong in the bucks during rutting-time, and one method of hunting them is to take advantage of it, and "flag" them up to the hunters by waving a red handkerchief or some other object to and fro in the air. In very wild places they can sometimes be flagged up, even after they have seen the man; but, elsewhere, the latter must keep himself carefully concealed behind a ridge or hillock, or in tall grass, and keep cau-

tiously waving the handkerchief overhead. The antelope will look fixedly at it, stamp, snort, start away, come nearer by fits and starts, and run from one side to the other, the better to see it. Sometimes a wary old buck will keep this up for half an hour, and at the end make off; but, again, the attraction may prove too strong, and the antelope comes slowly on until within rifle-shot. This method of hunting, however, is not so much practised now as formerly, as the antelope are getting continually shyer and more difficult to flag. I have never myself shot one in this manner, though I have often seen the feat performed, and have several times tried it myself, but always with the result that after I had made my arm really weak with waving the handkerchief to and fro, the antelope, which had been shifting about just out of range, suddenly took to its heels and made off.

No other kind of plains game, except the big-horn, is as shy and sharp-sighted as the antelope; and both its own habits and the

open nature of the ground on which it is found render it peculiarly difficult to stalk. There is no cover, and if a man is once seen by the game the latter will not let him get out of sight again, unless it decides to go off at a gait that soon puts half a dozen miles between them. It shifts its position, so as to keep the hunter continually in sight. Thus, if it is standing on a ridge, and the hunter disappear into a ravine up which he intends to crawl, the antelope promptly gallops off to some other place of observation from which its foe is again visible; and this is repeated until the animal at last makes up its mind to start for good. It keeps up an incessant watch, being ever on the look-out for danger, far or near; and as it can see an immense distance, and has its home on ground so level that a horseman can be made out a mile off, its attention is apt to be attracted when still four or five rifle-shots beyond range, and after it has once caught a glimpse of the foe, the latter might as well give up all hopes of getting the game.

But while so much more wary than deer, it is also at times much more foolish, and has certain habits—some of which, such as its inordinate curiosity and liability to panic, have already been alluded to—that tend to its destruction. Ordinarily, it is a far more difficult feat to kill an antelope than it is to kill a deer, but there are times when the former can be slaughtered in such numbers that it becomes mere butchery.

The prong-horn is pre-eminently a gregarious animal. It is found in bands almost all the year through. During the two or three days after he has shed his horns and while the new ones are growing the buck retires to some out-of-the-way spot, and while bringing forth her fawns the doe stays by herself. But as soon as possible each again rejoins the band; and the fawns become members of it at a remarkably early age. In the late fall, when the bitter cold has begun, a large number of these bands collect together, and immense herds are formed which last throughout the winter. Thus at

this season a man may travel for days through regions where antelope are most plentiful during the hot months and never see one; but if he does come across any they will be apt to be in great numbers, most probably along the edge of the Bad Lands, where the ground is rolling rather than broken, but where there is some shelter from the furious winter gales. Often they will even come down to the river bottom or find their way up to some plateau. They now always hang closely about the places they have chosen for their winter haunts, and seem very reluctant to leave them. They go in dense herds, and when starved and weak with cold are less shy; and can often be killed in great numbers by any one who has found out where they are—though a true sportsman will not molest them at this season.

Sometimes a small number of individuals will at this time get separated from the main herd and take up their abode in some place by themselves; and when they have once done so it is almost impossible to drive

them away. Last winter a solitary prong-horn strayed into the river bottom at the mouth of a wide creek-valley, half a mile from my ranch, and stayed there for three months, keeping with the cattle, and always being found within a mile of the same spot. A little band at the same time established itself on a large plateau, about five miles long by two miles wide, some distance up the river above me, and afforded fine sport to a couple of ranchmen who lived not far from its base. The antelope, twenty or thirty in number, would not leave the plateau, which lies in the midst of broken ground; for it is a peculiarity of these animals, which will be spoken of further on, that they will try to keep in the open ground at any cost or hazard. The two ranchmen agreed never to shoot at the antelope on foot, but only to try to kill them from horseback, either with their revolvers or their Winchesters. They thus hunted them for the sake of the sport purely; and certainly they got plenty of fun out of them. Very few horses indeed are as fast as a prong-

horn; and these few did not include any owned by either of my two friends. But the antelope were always being obliged to break back from the edge of the plateau, and so were forced constantly to offer opportunities for cutting them off; and these opportunities were still further increased by the two hunters separating. One of them would go to the upper end of the plateau and start the band, riding after them at full speed. They would distance him, but would be checked in their career by coming to the brink of the cliff; then they would turn at an angle and give their pursuer a chance to cut them off; and if they kept straight up the middle the other hunter would head them. When a favorable moment came the hunters would dash in as close as possible and empty their revolvers or repeaters into the herd; but it is astonishing how hard it is, when riding a horse at full speed, to hit any object, unless it is directly under the muzzle of the weapon. The number of cartridges spent compared to the number of prong-horn

killed was enormous; but the fun and excitement of the chase were the main objects with my friends, to whom the actual killing of the game was of entirely secondary importance. They went out after them about a dozen times during the winter, and killed in all ten or fifteen prong-horns.

A prong-horn is by far the fleetest animal on the plains; one can outrun and outlast a deer with the greatest ease. Very swift greyhounds can overtake them, if hunted in leashes or couples; but only a remarkably good dog can run one down single-handed. Besides prong-horn are most plucky little creatures, and will make a most resolute fight against a dog or wolf, striking with their fore-feet and punching with their not very formidable horns, and are so quick and wiry as to be really rather hard to master.

Antelope have the greatest objection to going on any thing but open ground, and seem to be absolutely unable to make a high jump. If a band is caught feeding in the bottom of a valley leading into a plain they invari-

ably make a rush straight to the mouth, even if the foe is stationed there, and will run heedlessly by him, no matter how narrow the mouth is, rather than not try to reach the open country. It is almost impossible to force them into even a small patch of brush, and they will face almost certain death rather than try to leap a really very trifling obstacle. If caught in a glade surrounded by a slight growth of brushwood, they make no effort whatever to get through or over this growth, but dash frantically out through the way by which they got in. Often the deer, especially the black-tail, will wander out on the edge of the plain frequented by antelope; and it is curious to see the two animals separate the second there is an alarm, the deer making for the broken country, while the antelope scud for the level plains. Once two of my men nearly caught a couple of antelope in their hands. They were out driving in the buck-board, and saw two antelope, a long distance ahead, enter the mouth of a wash-out (a canyon *in*

petto); they had strayed away from the prairie to the river bottom, and were evidently feeling lost. My two men did not think much of the matter but when opposite the mouth of the wash-out, which was only thirty feet or so wide, they saw the two antelopes starting to come out, having found that it was a blind passage, with no outlet at the other end. Both men jumped out of the buck-board and ran to the entrance; the two antelope dashed frantically to and fro inside the wash-out. The sides were steep, but a deer would have scaled them at once; yet the antelope seemed utterly unable to do this, and finally broke out past the two men and got away. They came so close that the men were able to touch each of them, but their movements were too quick to permit of their being caught.

However, though unable to leap any height, an antelope can skim across a level jump like a bird, and will go over water-courses and wash-outs that very few horses indeed will face. A mountain-sheep, on the

other hand, is a marvellous vertical leaper; the black-tail deer comes next; the white-tail is pretty good, and the elk is at any rate better than the antelope; but when it comes to horizontal jumping the latter can beat them all.

In May or early June the doe brings forth her fawns, usually two in number, for she is very prolific. She makes her bed in some valley or hollow, and keeps with the rest of the band, only returning to the fawns to feed them. They lie out in the grass or under some slight bush, but are marvellously hard to find. By instinct they at once know how to crouch down so as to be as inconspicuous as possible. Once we scared away a female prong-horn from an apparently perfectly level hill-side; and in riding along passed over the spot she had left and came upon two little fawns that could have been but a few hours old. They lay flat in the grass, with their legs doubled under them and their necks and heads stretched out on the ground. When we took them up and handled them,

they soon got used to us and moved awkwardly round, but at any sudden noise or motion they would immediately squat flat down again. But at a very early age the fawns learn how to shift for themselves, and can then run almost as fast as their parents, even when no larger than a jack-rabbit. Once, while we were haying, a couple of my cow-boys spent half an hour in trying to run down and capture a little fawn, but they were unable to catch it, it ran so fast and ducked about so quickly. Antelope fawns are very easily tamed and make most amusing pets. We have had two or three, but have never succeeded in rearing any of them; but some of the adjoining ranchmen have been more fortunate. They are not nearly so pretty as deer fawns, having long, gangling legs and angular bodies, but they are much more familiar and interesting. One of my neighbors has three live prong-horns, as well as two little spotted white-tail deer. The deer fawns are always skulking about, and are by no means such bold in-

quisitive little creatures as the small antelope are. The latter have a nurse in the shape of a fat old ewe; and it is funny to see her, when alarmed, running off at a waddling gait, while her ungainly little foster-children skip round and round her, cutting the most extraordinary antics. There are a couple of very large dogs, mastiffs, on the place, whose natural solemnity is completely disconcerted by the importunities and fearlessness of the little antelope fawns. Where one goes the other two always follow, and so one of the mastiffs, while solemnly blinking in the sun, will suddenly find himself charged at full speed by the three queer little creatures, who will often fairly butt up against him. The uneasy look of the dog, and his efforts to get out of the way without compromising his dignity, are really very comical.

Young fawns seem to give out no scent, and thus many of them escape from the numerous carnivorous beasts that are ever prowling about at night over the prairie, and which, during the spring months, are al-

ways fat from feeding on the bodies of the innocents they have murdered. If discovered by a fox or coyote during its first few days of existence a little fawn has no chance of life, although the mother, if present, will fight desperately for it; but after it has acquired the use of its legs it has no more to fear than have any of the older ones.

Sometimes the fawns fall victims to the great Golden Eagle. This grand bird, the War Eagle of the Sioux, is not very common in the Bad Lands, but is sometimes still seen with us; and, as everywhere else, its mere presence adds a certain grandeur to its lonely haunts. Two or three years ago a nest was found by one of my men on the face of an almost inaccessible cliff, and a young bird was taken out from it and reared in a roughly extemporized cage. Wherever the eagle exists it holds undisputed sway over every thing whose size does not protect it from the great bird's beak and talons; not only does it feed on hares, grouse, and ducks, but it will also attack the young fawns of the

deer and antelope. Still, the eagle is but an occasional foe, and aside from man, the only formidable enemies the antelope has to fear are the wolves and coyotes. These are very destructive to the young, and are always lounging about the band to pick up any wounded straggler; in winter, when the ground is slippery and the antelope numbed and weak, they will often commit great havoc even among those that are grown up.

The voice of the antelope is not at all like that of the deer. Instead of bleating it utters a quick, harsh noise, a kind of bark; a little like the sound "kau," sharply and clearly repeated. It can be heard a long distance off; and is usually uttered when the animal is a little startled or surprised by the presence of something it does not understand.

The prong-horn cannot go without water any longer than a deer can, and will go great distances to get it; for space is nothing to a traveller with such speed and such last. No matter how dry and barren may be the desert

in which antelope are found, it may be taken for granted that they are always within reaching distance of some spring or pool of water, and that they visit it once a day. Once or twice I have camped out by some pool, which was the only one for miles around, and in every such case have been surprised at night by the visits of the antelope, who, on finding that their drinking-place was tenanted, would hover round at a short distance, returning again and again and continually uttering the barking "kau, kau," until they became convinced that there was no hope of their getting in, when they would set off at a run for some other place.

Prong-horn perhaps prefer the rolling prairies of short grass as their home, but seem to do almost equally well on the desolate and monotonous wastes where the sage-brush and prickly pear and a few blades of coarse grass are the only signs of plant life to be seen. In such places, the prong-horn, the sage cock, the rattlesnake, and the horned frog alone are able to make out a livelihood.

The horned frog is not a frog at all, but a lizard,—a queer, stumpy little fellow with spikes all over the top of its head and back, and given to moving in the most leisurely manner imaginable. Nothing will make it hurry. If taken home it becomes a very tame and quaint but also very uninteresting little pet.

Rattlesnakes are only too plentiful everywhere; along the river bottoms, in the broken, hilly ground, and on the prairies and the great desert wastes alike. Every cow-boy kills dozens each season. To a man wearing top-boots there is little or no danger while he is merely walking about, for the fangs cannot get through the leather, and the snake does not strike as high as the knee. Indeed the rattlesnake is not nearly as dangerous as are most poisonous serpents, for it always gives fair warning before striking, and is both sluggish and timid. If it can it will get out of the way, and only coils up in its attitude of defence when it believes that it is actually menaced.

It is, of course, however, both a dangerous and a disagreeable neighbor, and one of its annoying traits is the fondness it displays for crawling into a hut or taking refuge among the blankets left out on the ground. Except in such cases men are rarely in danger from it, unless they happen to be stooping over, as was the case with one of my cow-boys who had leaned over to pick up a log, and was almost bitten by a snake which was underneath it; or unless the snake is encountered while stalking an animal. Once I was creeping up to an antelope under cover of some very low sage-brush—so low that I had to lie flat on my face and push myself along with my hands and feet. While cautiously moving on in this way I was electrified by hearing almost by my ears the well-known, ominous "whir-r-r" of a rattlesnake, and on hastily glancing up there was the reptile, not ten feet away from me, all coiled up and waiting. I backed off and crawled to one side, the rattler turning its head round to keep

watch over my movements; when the stalk was over (the antelope took alarm and ran off before I was within rifle-shot) I came back, hunted up the snake, and killed it. Although I have known of several men being bitten, I know of but one case where the bite caused the death of a human being. This was a girl who had been out milking, and was returning, in bare feet; the snake struck her just above the ankle, and in her fright she fell and was struck again in the neck. The double wound was too much for her, and the poison killed her in the course of a couple of hours.

Occasionally one meets a rattlesnake whose rattle has been lost or injured; and such a one is always dangerous, because it strikes without warning. I once nearly lost a horse by the bite of one of these snakes without rattles. I was riding along a path when my horse gave a tremendous start and jump; looking back I saw that it had been struck at by a rattlesnake with an injured tail, which had been lying hid

in a bunch of grass, directly beside the path. Luckily it had merely hit the hard hoof, breaking one of its fangs.

Horses differ very much in their conduct toward snakes. Some show great fright at sight of them or on hearing their rattles, plunging and rearing and refusing to go anywhere near the spot; while others have no fear of them at all, being really perfectly stupid about them. Manitou does not lose his wits at all over them, but at the same time takes very good care not to come within striking distance.

Ranchmen often suffer some loss among their stock owing to snake-bites; both horned cattle and horses, in grazing, frequently coming on snakes and having their noses or cheeks bitten. Generally, these wounds are not fatal, though very uncomfortable; it is not uncommon to see a woebegone looking mule with its head double the natural size, in consequence of having incautiously browsed over a snake. A neighbor lost a weak pony in this way; and

one of our best steers also perished from the same cause. But in the latter case, the animal, like the poor girl spoken of above, had received two wounds with the poison fangs; apparently it had, while grazing with its head down, been first struck in the nose, and been again struck in the foreleg as it started away.

Of all kinds of hunting, the chase of the antelope is pre-eminently that requiring skill in the use of the rifle at long range. The distance at which shots have to be taken in antelope hunting is at least double the ordinary distance at which deer are fired at. In pursuing most other kinds of game, a hunter who is not a good shot may still do excellent work; but in prong-horn hunting, no man can make even a fairly good record unless he is a skilful marksman. I have myself done but little hunting after antelopes, and have not, as a rule, been very successful in the pursuit.

Ordinary hounds are rarely, or never, used to chase this game; but coursing it with

greyhounds is as manly and exhilarating a form of sport as can be imagined,—a much better way of hunting it than is shooting it with the rifle, which latter, though needing more skill in the actual use of the weapon, is in every other respect greatly inferior as a sport to still-hunting the black-tail or big-horn.

I never but once took a trip of any length with antelope hunting for its chief object. This was one June, when all the men were away on the round-up. As is usual during the busy half of the ranchman's year, the spring and summer, when men have no time to hunt and game is out of condition, we had been living on salt pork, beans, potatoes, and bread; and I had hardly had a rifle in my hand for months; so, finding I had a few days to spare, I thought I should take a short trip on the prairie, in the beautiful June weather, and get a little sport and a little fresh meat out of the bands of prong-horn bucks, which I was sure to encounter. Intending to be gone but a couple of days,

it was not necessary to take many articles. Behind my saddle I carried a blanket for bedding, and an oil-skin coat to ward off the wet; a large metal cup with the handle riveted, not soldered on, so that water could be boiled in it; a little tea and salt, and some biscuits; and a small water-proof bag containing my half dozen personal necessaries—not forgetting a book. The whole formed a small, light pack, very little encumbrance to stout old Manitou. In June, fair weather can generally be counted on in the dry plains country.

I started in the very earliest morning, when the intense brilliancy of the stars had just begun to pale before the first streak of dawn. By the time I left the river bottom and struck off up the valley of a winding creek, which led through the Bad Lands, the eastern sky was growing rosy; and soon the buttes and cliffs were lit up by the level rays of the cloudless summer sun. The air was fresh and sweet, and odorous with the sweet scents of the spring-time that was but

barely passed; the dew lay heavy, in glittering drops, on the leaves and the blades of grass, whose vivid green, at this season, for a short time brightens the desolate and sterile-looking wastes of the lonely western plains. The rose-bushes were all in bloom, and their pink blossoms clustered in every point and bend of the stream; and the sweet, sad songs of the hermit thrushes rose from the thickets, while the meadow larks perched boldly in sight as they uttered their louder and more cheerful music. The round-up had passed by our ranch, and all the cattle with our brands, the maltese cross and cut dewlap, or the elk-horn and triangle, had been turned loose; they had not yet worked away from the river, and I rode by long strings of them, walking in single file off to the hills, or standing in groups to look at me as I passed.

Leaving the creek I struck off among a region of scoria buttes, the ground rising into rounded hills through whose grassy covering the red volcanic rock showed in places,

while boulder-like fragments of it were scattered all through the valleys between. There were a few clumps of bushes here and there, and near one of them were two magpies, who lit on an old buffalo skull, bleached white by sun and snow. Magpies are birds that catch the eye at once from their bold black and white plumage and long tails; and they are very saucy and at the same time very cunning and shy. In spring we do not often see them; but in the late fall and winter they will come close round the huts and out-buildings on the look-out for any thing to eat. If a deer is hung up and they can get at it they will pick it to pieces with their sharp bills; and their carnivorous tastes and their habit of coming round hunters' camps after the game that is left out, call to mind their kinsman, the whiskey-jack or moose-bird of the northern forests.

After passing the last line of low, rounded scoria buttes, the horse stepped out on the border of the great, seemingly endless stretches of rolling or nearly level prairie,

over which I had planned to travel and hunt for the next two or three days. At intervals of ten or a dozen miles this prairie was crossed by dry creeks, with, in places in their beds, pools or springs of water, and alongside a spindling growth of trees and bushes; and my intention was to hunt across these creeks, and camp by some water-hole in one of them at night.

I rode over the land in a general southerly course, bending to the right or left according to the nature of the ground and the likelihood of finding game. Most of the time the horse kept on a steady single-foot, but this was varied by a sharp lope every now and then, to ease the muscles of both steed and rider. The sun was well up, and its beams beat fiercely down on our heads from out of the cloudless sky; for at this season, though the nights and the early morning and late evening are cool and pleasant, the hours around noon are very hot. My glass was slung alongside the saddle, and from every one of the scattered hillocks the country

was scanned carefully far and near; and the greatest caution was used in riding up over any divide, to be sure that no game on the opposite side was scared by the sudden appearance of my horse or myself.

Nowhere, not even at sea, does a man feel more lonely than when riding over the far-reaching, seemingly never-ending plains; and after a man has lived a little while on or near them, their very vastness and loneliness and their melancholy monotony have a strong fascination for him. The landscape seems always the same, and after the traveller has plodded on for miles and miles he gets to feel as if the distance was indeed boundless. As far as the eye can see there is no break; either the prairie stretches out into perfectly level flats, or else there are gentle, rolling slopes, whose crests mark the divides between the drainage systems of the different creeks; and when one of these is ascended, immediately another precisely like it takes its place in the distance, and so roll succeeds roll in a succession as intermin-

able as that of the waves of the ocean. Nowhere else does one seem so far off from all mankind; the plains stretch out in deathlike and measureless expanse, and as he journeys over them they will for many miles be lacking in all signs of life. Although he can see so far, yet all objects on the outermost verge of the horizon, even though within the ken of his vision, look unreal and strange; for there is no shade to take away from the bright glare, and at a little distance things seem to shimmer and dance in the hot rays of the sun. The ground is scorched to a dull brown, and against its monotonous expanse any objects stand out with a prominence that makes it difficult to judge of the distance at which they are. A mile off one can see, through the strange shimmering haze, the shadowy white outlines of something which looms vaguely up till it looks as large as the canvas-top of a prairie wagon; but as the horseman comes nearer it shrinks and dwindles and takes clearer form, until at last it changes into the

ghastly staring skull of some mighty buffalo, long dead and gone to join the rest of his vanished race.

When the grassy prairies are left and the traveller enters a region of alkali desert and sage-brush, the look of the country becomes even more grim and forbidding. In places the alkali forms a white frost on the ground that glances in the sunlight like the surface of a frozen lake; the dusty little sage-brush, stunted and dried up, sprawls over the parched ground, from which it can hardly extract the small amount of nourishment necessary for even its weazened life; the spiny cactus alone seems to be really in its true home. Yet even in such places antelope will be found, as alert and as abounding with vivacious life as elsewhere. Owing to the magnifying and distorting power of the clear, dry plains air, every object, no matter what its shape or color or apparent distance, needs the closest examination. A magpie sitting on a white skull, or a couple of ravens, will look, a quarter of a mile off, like some

curious beast; and time and again a raw hunter will try to stalk a lump of clay or a burnt stick; and after being once or twice disappointed he is apt to rush to the other extreme, and conclude too hastily that a given object is not an antelope, when it very possibly is.

During the morning I came in sight of several small bands or pairs of antelope. Most of them saw me as soon as or before I saw them, and after watching me with intense curiosity as long as I was in sight and at a distance, made off at once as soon as I went into a hollow or appeared to be approaching too near. Twice, in scanning the country narrowly with the glasses, from behind a sheltering divide, bands of prong-horn were seen that had not discovered me. In each case the horse was at once left to graze, while I started off after the game, nearly a mile distant. For the first half mile I could walk upright or go along half stooping; then, as the distance grew closer, I had to crawl on all fours and keep behind any little broken

bank, or take advantage of a small, dry watercourse; and toward the end work my way flat on my face, wriggling like a serpent, using every stunted sagebrush or patch of cactus as a cover, bare-headed under the blazing sun. In each case, after nearly an hour's irksome, thirsty work, the stalk failed. One band simply ran off without a second's warning, alarmed at some awkward movement on my part, and without giving a chance for a shot. In the other instance, while still at very long and uncertain range, I heard the sharp barking alarm-note of one of the prong-horn; the whole band instantly raising their heads and gazing intently at their would-be destroyer. They were a very long way off; but, seeing it was hopeless to try to get nearer I rested my rifle over a little mound of earth and fired. The dust came up in a puff to one side of the nearest antelope; the whole band took a few jumps and turned again; the second shot struck at their feet, and they went off like so many race-horses, being missed again as they ran.

I sat up by a sage-brush thinking they would of course not come back, when to my surprise I saw them wheel round with the precision of a cavalry squadron, all in line and fronting me, the white and brown markings on their heads and throats showing like the facings on soldiers' uniforms; and then back they came charging up till again within long range, when they wheeled their line as if on a pivot and once more made off, this time for good, not heeding an ineffectual fusillade from the Winchester. Antelope often go through a series of regular evolutions, like so many trained horsemen, wheeling, turning, halting, and running as if under command; and their coming back to again run the (as it proved very harmless) gauntlet of my fire was due either to curiosity or to one of those panicky freaks which occasionally seize those ordinarily wary animals, and cause them to run into danger easily avoided by creatures commonly much more readily approached than they are. I had fired half a dozen shots without effect; but while no

one ever gets over his feeling of self-indignation at missing an easy shot at close quarters, any one who hunts antelope and is not of a disposition so timid as never to take chances, soon learns that he has to expect to expend a good deal of powder and lead before bagging his game.

By mid-day we reached a dry creek and followed up its course for a mile or so, till a small spot of green in the side of a bank showed the presence of water, a little pool of which lay underneath. The ground was so rotten that it was with difficulty I could get Manitou down where he could drink; but at last both of us satisfied our thirst, and he was turned loose to graze, with his saddle off, so as to cool his back, and I, after eating a biscuit, lay on my face on the ground—there was no shade of any sort near—and dozed until a couple of hours' rest and feed had put the horse in good trim for the afternoon ride. When it came to crossing over the dry creek on whose bank we had rested, we almost went down in a quicksand, and it

was only by frantic struggles and floundering that we managed to get over.

On account of these quicksands and mud-holes, crossing the creeks on the prairie is often very disagreeable work. Even when apparently perfectly dry the bottom may have merely a thin crust of hard mud and underneath a fathomless bed of slime. If the grass appears wet and with here and there a few tussocks of taller blades in it, it is well to avoid it. Often a man may have to go along a creek nearly a mile before he can find a safe crossing, or else run the risk of seeing his horse mired hard and fast. When a horse is once in a mud-hole it will perhaps so exhaust itself by its first desperate and fruitless struggle that it is almost impossible to get it out. Its bridle and saddle have to be taken off; if another horse is along the lariat is drawn from the pommel of the latter's saddle to the neck of the one that is in, and it is hauled out by main force. Otherwise a man may have to work half a day, fixing the horse's legs in the right position and then

taking it by the forelock and endeavoring to get it to make a plunge; each plunge bringing it perhaps a few inches nearer the firm ground. Quicksands are even more dangerous than these mud-holes, as, if at all deep, a creature that cannot get out immediately is sure to be speedily engulfed. Many parts of the Little Missouri are impassable on account of these quicksands. Always in crossing unknown ground that looks dangerous it is best to feel your way very cautiously along and, if possible, to find out some cattle trail or even game trail which can be followed.

For some time after leaving the creek nothing was seen; until, on coming over the crest of the next great divide, I came in sight of a band of six or eight prong-horn about a quarter of a mile off to my right hand. There was a slight breeze from the southeast, which blew diagonally across my path towards the antelopes. The latter, after staring at me a minute, as I rode slowly on, suddenly started at full speed to run directly up wind,

and therefore in a direction that would cut the line of my course less than half a mile ahead of where I was. Knowing that when antelope begin running in a straight line they are very hard to turn, and seeing that they would have to run a longer distance than my horse would to intercept them, I clapped spurs into Manitou, and the game old fellow, a very fleet runner, stretched himself down to the ground and seemed to go almost as fast as the quarry. As I had expected, the latter, when they saw me running, merely straightened themselves out and went on, possibly even faster than before, without changing the line of their flight, keeping right up wind. Both horse and antelope fairly flew over the ground, their courses being at an angle that would certainly bring them together. Two of the antelope led, by some fifty yards or so, the others, who were all bunched together. Nearer and nearer we came, Manitou, in spite of carrying myself and the pack behind the saddle, gamely holding his own, while the antelope, with out-

stretched necks, went at an even, regular gait that offered a strong contrast to the springing bounds with which a deer runs. At last the two leading animals crossed the line of my flight ahead of me; when I pulled short up, leaped from Manitou's back, and blazed into the band as they went by not forty yards off, aiming well ahead of a fine buck who was on the side nearest me. An antelope's gait is so even that it offers a good running mark; and as the smoke blew off I saw the buck roll over like a rabbit, with both shoulders broken. I then emptied the Winchester at the rest of the band, breaking one hind leg of a young buck. Hastily cutting the throat of, and opening, the dead buck, I again mounted and started off after the wounded one. But, though only on three legs, it went astonishingly fast, having had a good start; and after following it over a mile I gave up the pursuit, though I had gained a good deal; for the heat was very great, and I did not deem it well to tire the horse at the beginning of the trip. Re-

turning to the carcass, I cut off the hams and strung them beside the saddle; an antelope is so spare that there is very little more meat on the body.

This trick of running in a straight line is another of the antelope's peculiar characteristics which frequently lead it into danger. Although with so much sharper eyes than a deer, antelope are in many ways far stupider animals, more like sheep, and they especially resemble the latter in their habit of following a leader, and in their foolish obstinacy in keeping to a course they have once adopted. If a horseman starts to head off a deer the latter will always turn long before he has come within range, but quite often an antelope will merely increase his speed and try to pass ahead of his foe. Almost always, however, one if alone will keep out of gunshot, owing to the speed at which he goes, but if there are several in a band which is well strung out, the leader only cares for his own safety and passes well ahead himself. The others follow like sheep, without

turning in the least from the line the first followed, and thus may pass within close range. If the leader bounds into the air, those following will often go through exactly the same motions; and if he turns, the others are very apt to each in succession run up and turn in the same place, unless the whole band are manœuvring together, like a squadron of cavalry under orders, as has already been spoken of.

After securing the buck's hams and head (the latter for the sake of the horns, which were unusually long and fine), I pushed rapidly on without stopping to hunt, to reach some large creek which should contain both wood and water, for even in summer a fire adds greatly to the comfort and cosiness of a night camp. When the sun had nearly set we went over a divide and came in sight of a creek fulfilling the required conditions. It wound its way through a valley of rich bottom land, cotton-wood trees of no great height or size growing in thick groves along its banks, while its bed contained many deep

pools of water, some of it fresh and good. I rode into a great bend, with a grove of trees on its right and containing excellent feed. Manitou was loosed, with the lariat round his neck, to feed where he wished until I went to bed, when he was to be taken to a place where the grass was thick and succulent, and tethered out for the night. There was any amount of wood with which a fire was started for cheerfulness, and some of the coals were soon raked off apart to cook over. The horse blanket was spread on the ground, with the oil-skin over it as a bed, underneath a spreading cotton-wood tree, while the regular blanket served as covering. The metal cup was soon filled with water and simmering over the coals to make tea, while an antelope steak was roasting on a forked stick. It is wonderful how cosy a camp, in clear weather, becomes if there is a good fire and enough to eat, and how sound the sleep is afterwards in the cool air, with the brilliant stars glimmering through the branches overhead. In the country where I

was there was absolutely no danger from Indian horse-thieves, and practically none from white ones, for I felt pretty sure no one was anywhere within a good many miles of me, and none could have seen me come into the valley. Besides, in the cattle country stealing horses is a hazardous profession, as any man who is found engaged in it is at once, and very properly, strung up to the nearest tree, or shot if no trees are handy; so very few people follow it, at least for any length of time, and a man's horses are generally safe.

Near where we had halted for the night camp was a large prairie-dog town. Prairie-dogs are abundant all over the cattle country; they are in shape like little woodchucks, and are the most noisy and inquisitive animals imaginable. They are never found singly, but always in towns of several hundred inhabitants; and these towns are found in all kinds of places where the country is flat and treeless. Sometimes they will be placed on the bottoms of the creeks or rivers, and again

far out on the prairie or among the Bad Lands, a long distance from any water. Indeed, so dry are some of the localities in which they exist, that it is a marvel how they can live at all; yet they seem invariably plump and in good condition. They are exceedingly destructive to grass, eating away every thing round their burrows, and thus each town is always extending at the borders, while the holes in the middle are deserted; in many districts they have become a perfect bane to the cattle-men, for the incoming of man has been the means of causing a great falling off in the ranks of their four-footed foes, and this main check to their increase being gone, they multiply at a rate that threatens to make them a serious pest in the future. They are among the few plains animals who are benefited instead of being injured by the presence of man; and it is most difficult to exterminate them or to keep their number in any way under, as they are prolific to a most extraordinary degree; and the quantity of good feed they destroy is

very great, and as they eat up the roots of the grass it is a long time before it grows again. Already in many districts the stockmen are seriously considering the best way in which to take steps against them. Prairie-dogs wherever they exist are sure to attract attention, all the more so because, unlike most other rodents, they are diurnal and not nocturnal, offering therein a curious case of parallelism to their fellow denizen of the dry plains, the antelope, which is also a creature loving to be up and stirring in the bright daylight, unlike its relatives, the dusk-loving deer. They are very noisy, their shrill yelping resounding on all sides whenever a man rides through a town. None go far from their homes, always keeping close enough to be able to skulk into them at once; and as soon as a foe appears they take refuge on the hillocks beside their burrows, yelping continuously, and accompanying each yelp by a spasmodic jerking of the tail and body. When the man comes a little nearer they disappear inside and then thrust their heads out,

for they are most inquisitive. Their burrows form one of the chief dangers to riding at full speed over the plains country; hardly any man can do much riding on the prairie for more than a year or two without coming to grief on more than one occasion by his horse putting its foot in a prairie-dog hole. A badger hole is even worse. When a horse gets his foot in such a hole, while going at full speed, he turns a complete somersault, and is lucky if he escape without a broken leg, while I have time and again known the rider to be severely injured. There are other smaller animals whose burrows sometimes cause a horseman to receive a sharp tumble. These are the pocket-gophers, queer creatures, shaped like moles and having the same subterranean habits, but with teeth like a rat's, and great pouches on the outside of their jaws, whose long, rambling tunnels cover the ground in certain places, though the animals themselves are very rarely seen; and the little striped gophers and gray gophers, entirely different animals, more like

ground squirrels. But the prairie-dog is always the main source of danger to the horseman, as well as of mischief to the cattle-herder.

Around the prairie-dog towns it is always well to keep a look-out for the smaller carnivora, especially coyotes and badgers, as they are very fond of such neighborhoods, and almost always it is also a favorite resort for the larger kinds of hawks, which are so numerous throughout the cattle country. Rattlesnakes are quite plenty, living in the deserted holes, and the latter are also the homes of the little burrowing owls, which will often be seen standing at the opening, ready to run in as quick as any of the prairie-dogs if danger threatens. They have a funny habit of gravely bowing or posturing at the passer-by, and stand up very erect on their legs. With the exception of this species, owls are rare in the cattle country.

A prairie-dog is rather a difficult animal to get, as it stands so close to its burrow that a spasmodic kick, even if at the last gasp,

sends the body inside, where it cannot be recovered. The cowboys are always practising at them with their revolvers, and as they are pretty good shots, mortally wound a good many, but unless the force of the blow fairly knocks the prairie-dog away from the mouth of the burrow, it almost always manages to escape inside. But a good shot with the rifle can kill any number by lying down quietly and waiting a few minutes until the dogs get a little distance from the mouths of their homes.

Badgers are more commonly found round prairie-dog towns than anywhere else; and they get their chief food by digging up the prairie-dogs and gophers with their strong forearms and long, stout claws. They are not often found wandering away from their homes in the daytime, but if so caught are easily run down and killed. A badger is a most desperate fighter, and an overmatch for a coyote, his hide being very thick and his form so squat and strong that it is hard to break his back or legs, while his sharp teeth

grip like a steel trap. A very few seconds allow him to dig a hole in the ground, into which he can back all except his head; and when placed thus, with his rear and flanks protected, he can beat off a dog many times his own size. A young badger one night came up round the ranch-house, and began gnawing at some bones that had been left near the door. Hearing the noise one of my men took a lantern and went outside. The glare of the light seemed to make the badger stupid, for after looking at the lantern a few moments, it coolly turned and went on eating the scraps of flesh on the bones, and was knocked on the head without attempting to escape.

To come back to my trip. Early in the morning I was awakened by the shrill yelping of the prairie-dogs whose town was near me. The sun had not yet risen, and the air had the peculiar chill it always takes on toward morning, while little wreaths of light mist rose from the pools. Getting up and loosing Manitou to let him feed round where

he wished and slake his thirst, I took the rifle, strolled up the creek valley a short distance, and turned off out on the prairie. Nothing was in sight in the way of game; but overhead a skylark was singing, soaring up above me so high that I could not make out his form in the gray morning light. I listened for some time, and the music never ceased for a moment, coming down clear, sweet, and tender from the air above. Soon the strains of another answered from a little distance off, and the two kept soaring and singing as long as I stayed to listen; and when I walked away I could still hear their notes behind me. In some ways the skylark is the sweetest singer we have; only certain of the thrushes rival it, but though the songs of the latter have perhaps even more melody, they are far from being as uninterrupted and well sustained, being rather a succession of broken bursts of music.

The sun was just appearing when I walked back to the creek bottom. Coming slowly out of a patch of brush-wood, was

a doe, going down to drink; her great, sensitive ears thrown forward as she peered anxiously and timidly round. She was very watchful, lifting her head and gazing about between every few mouthfuls. When she had drunk her fill she snatched a hasty mouthful or two of the wet grass, and then cantered back to the edge of the brush, when a little spotted fawn came out and joined her. The two stood together for a few moments, and then walked off into the cover. The little pond at which they had drunk was within fifty yards of my night bed; and it had other tenants in the shape of a mallard duck, with a brood of little ducklings, balls of fuzzy yellow down, that bobbed off into the reeds like little corks as I walked by.

Breaking camp is a simple operation for one man; and but a few minutes after breakfast Manitou and I were off; the embers of the fire having been extinguished with the care that comes to be almost second nature with the cattle-man, one of whose chief dreads is the prairie fire, that sometimes robs

his stock of such an immense amount of feed. Very little game was seen during the morning, as I rode in an almost straight line over the hot, parched plains, the ground cracked and seamed by the heat, and the dull brown blades bending over as if the sun was too much even for them. The sweat drenched the horse even when we were walking; and long before noon we halted for rest by a bitter alkaline pool with border so steep and rotten that I had to bring water up to the horse in my hat; having taken some along in a canteen for my own use. But there was a steep bank near, overgrown with young trees, and thus giving good shade; and it was this that induced me to stop. When leaving this halting-place, I spied three figures in the distance, loping towards me; they turned out to be cowboys, who had been out a couple of days looking up a band of strayed ponies, and as they had exhausted their supply of food, I gave them the antelope hams, trusting to shoot another for my own use.

Nor was I disappointed. After leaving

the cowboys I headed the horse towards the more rolling country where the prairies begin to break off into the edges of the Bad Lands. Several bands of antelope were seen, and I tried one unsuccessful stalk, not being able to come within rifle range; but towards evening, when only about a mile from a wooded creek on whose banks I intended to sleep, I came across a solitary buck, just as I was topping the ridge of the last divide. As I was keeping a sharp lookout at the time, I reined in the horse the instant the head of the antelope came in sight, and jumping off crept up till I could see his whole body, when I dropped on my knee and took steady aim. He was a long way off (three hundred yards by actual pacing), and not having made out exactly what we were he stood still, looking intently in our direction and broadside to us. I held well over his shoulder, and at the report he dropped like a shot, the ball having broken his neck. It was a very good shot; the best I ever made at antelope, of which game, as already said, I have killed

but very few individuals. Taking the hams and saddle I rode on down to the creek and again went into camp among timber. Thus on this trip I was never successful in outwitting antelope on the several occasions when I pitted my craft and skill against their wariness and keen senses, always either failing to get within range or else missing them; but nevertheless I got two by taking advantage of the stupidity and curiosity which they occasionally show.

The middle part of the days having proved so very hot, and as my store of biscuits was nearly gone, and as I knew, moreover, that the antelope meat would not keep over twenty-four hours, I decided to push back home next day; and accordingly I broke camp at the first streak of dawn, and took Manitou back to the ranch at a smart lope.

A solitary trip such as this was, through a comparatively wild region in which game is still plentiful, always has great attraction for any man who cares for sport and for nature, and who is able to be his own com-

panion, but the pleasure after all depends a good deal on the weather. To be sure, after a little experience in roughing it, the hardships seem a good deal less formidable than they formerly did, and a man becomes able to roll up in a wet blanket and sleep all night in a pelting rain without hurting himself—though he will shiver a good deal, and feel pretty numb and stiff in those chill and dreary hours just before dawn. But when a man's clothes and bedding and rifle are all wet, no matter how philosophically he may bear it, it may be taken for granted that he does not enjoy it. So fair weather is a very vital and important element among those that go to make up the pleasure and success of such a trip. Luckily fair weather can be counted on with a good deal of certainty in late spring and throughout most of the summer and fall on the northern cattle plains. The storms that do take place, though very violent, do not last long.

Every now and then, however, there will be in the fall a three-days' storm in which it

is almost impossible to travel, and then the best thing to be done is to lie up under any shelter that is at hand until it blows over. I remember one such camp which was made in the midst of the most singular and picturesque surroundings. It was toward the end of a long wagon trip that we had been taking, and all of the horses were tired by incessant work. We had come through country which was entirely new to us, passing nearly all day in a long flat prairie through which flowed a stream that we supposed to be either the Box Alder or the Little Beaver. In leaving this we had struck some heavy sand-hills, and while pulling the loaded wagon up them one of the team played out completely, and we had to take her out and put in one of the spare saddle-ponies, a tough little fellow. Night came on fast, and the sun was just setting when we crossed the final ridge and came in sight of as singular a bit of country as I have ever seen. The cowboys, as we afterward found, had christened the place "Medicine Buttes." In

plains dialect, I may explain, "Medicine" has been adopted from the Indians, among whom it means any thing supernatural or very unusual. It is used in the sense of "magic," or "out of the common."

Over an irregular tract of gently rolling sandy hills, perhaps about three quarters of a mile square, were scattered several hundred detached and isolated buttes or cliffs of sandstone, each butte from fifteen to fifty feet high, and from thirty to a couple of hundred feet across. Some of them rose as sharp peaks or ridges, or as connected chains, but much the greater number had flat tops like little table-lands. The sides were perfectly perpendicular, and were cut and channelled by the weather into the most extraordinary forms; caves, columns, battlements, spires, and flying buttresses were mingled in the strangest confusion. Many of the caves were worn clear through the buttes, and they were at every height in the sides, while ledges ran across the faces, and shoulders and columns jutted out from the

corners. On the tops and at the bases of most of the cliffs grew pine trees, some of considerable height, and the sand gave every thing a clean, white look.

Altogether it was as fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen: it seemed impossible that the hand of man should not have had something to do with its formation. There was a spring of clear cold water a few hundred yards off, with good feed for the horses round it; and we made our camp at the foot of one of the largest buttes, building a roaring pine-log fire in an angle in the face of the cliff, while our beds were under the pine trees. It was the time of the full moon, and the early part of the night was clear. The flame of the fire leaped up the side of the cliff, the red light bringing out into lurid and ghastly relief the bold corners and strange-looking escarpments of the rock, while against it the stiff limbs of the pines stood out like rigid bars of iron. Walking off out of sight of the circle of fire light, among the tall crags, the place seemed al-

most as unreal as if we had been in fairy-land. The flood of clear moonlight turned the white faces of the cliffs and the grounds between them into shining silver, against which the pines showed dark and sombre, while the intensely black shadows of the buttes took on forms that were grimly fantastic. Every cave or cranny in the crags looked so black that it seemed almost to be thrown out from the surface, and when the branches of the trees moved, the bright moonlight danced on the ground as if it were a sheet of molten metal. Neither in shape nor in color did our surroundings seem to belong to the dull gray world through which we had been travelling all day.

But by next morning every thing had changed. A furious gale of wind was blowing, and we were shrouded in a dense, drizzling mist, through which at times the rain drove in level sheets. Now and then the fog would blow away, and then would come on thicker than ever; and when it began to clear off a steady rain took its place, and the wind

increased to a regular hurricane. With its canvas top on, the wagon would certainly have been blown over if on open ground, and it was impossible to start or keep a fire except under the sheltered lee of the cliff. Moreover, the wind kept shifting, and we had to shift too, as fast as ever it started to blow from a new quarter; and thus in the course of the twenty-four hours we made a complete circle of the cliff at whose base we were. Our blankets got wet during the night; and they got no drier during the day; and the second night, as we slept on them they got steadily damper. Our provisions were pretty nearly out, and so, with little to eat and less to do, wet and uncomfortable, we cowered over the sputtering fire, and whiled the long day away as best we might with our own thoughts; fortunately we had all learned that no matter how bad things are, grumbling and bad temper can always be depended upon to make them worse, and so bore our ill-fortune, if not with stoical indifference, at least in perfect quiet. Next

day the storm still continued, but the fog was gone and the wind somewhat easier; and we spent the whole day looking up the horses, which had drifted a long distance before the storm; nor was it till the morning of the third day that we left our beautiful but, as events had made it, uncomfortable camping-ground.

In midsummer the storms are rarely of long duration, but are very severe while they last. I remember well one day when I was caught in such a storm. I had gone some twenty-five miles from the ranch to see the round-up, which had reached what is known as the Oxbow of the Little Missouri, where the river makes a great loop round a flat grassy bottom, on which the cattle herd was gathered. I stayed, seeing the cattle cut out and the calves branded, until after dinner; for it was at the time of the year when the days were longest.

At last the work was ended, and I started home in the twilight. The horse splashed across the shallow ford, and then spent half

an hour in climbing up through the rugged side hills, till we reached the top of the first great plateau that had to be crossed. As soon as I got on it I put in the spurs and started off at a gallop. In the dusk the brown level land stretched out in formless expanse ahead of me, unrelieved, except by the bleached white of a buffalo's skull, whose outlines glimmered indistinctly to one side of the course I was riding. On my left the sun had set behind a row of jagged buttes, that loomed up in sharp relief against the western sky; above them it had left a bar of yellow light, which only made more intense the darkness of the surrounding heavens. In the quarter towards which I was heading there had gathered a lowering mass of black storm-clouds, lit up by the incessant play of the lightning. The wind had totally died away, and the death-like stillness was only broken by the continuous, measured beat of the horse's hoofs as he galloped over the plain, and at times by the muttered roll of the distant thunder.

Without slacking pace I crossed the plateau, and as I came to the other edge the storm burst in sheets and torrents of water. In five minutes I was drenched through, and to guide myself had to take advantage of the continual flashes of lightning; and I was right glad, half an hour afterward, to stop and take shelter in the log hut of a couple of cowboys, where I could get dry and warm.

CHAPTER II

A TRIP AFTER MOUNTAIN SHEEP

LATE one fall a spell of bitter weather set in, and lasted on through the early part of the winter. For many days together the cold was fierce in its intensity; and the wheels of the ranch-wagon, when we drove out for a load of fire-wood, creaked and sang as they ground through the powdery snow that lay light on the ground. At night in the clear sky the stars seemed to snap and glitter; and for weeks of cloudless white weather the sun shone down on a land from which his beams glanced and glistened as if it had been the surface of a mirror, till the glare hurt the eyes that looked upon it. In the still nights we could hear the trees crack and jar from the strain of the biting frost;

and in its winding bed the river lay fixed like a huge bent bar of blue steel.

We had been told that a small band of bighorn was hanging around some very steep and broken country about twenty-five miles from the ranch-house. I had been out after them once alone, but had failed to find even their tracks, and had made up my mind that in order to hunt them it would be necessary to make a three- or four-days' trip, taking along the buck-board with our bedding and eatables. The trip had been delayed owing to two of my men, who had been sent out to buy ponies, coming in with a bunch of fifty, for the most part hardly broken. Some of them were meant for the use of the lower ranch, and the men from the latter had come up to get them. At night the ponies were let loose, and each day were gathered into the horse corral and broken as well as we could break them in such weather. It was my intention not to start on the hunt until the ponies were separated into the two bands, and the men from the lower ranch

(the Elkhorn) had gone off with theirs. Then one of the cowboys was to take the buck-board up to a deserted hunter's hut, which lay on a great bend of the river near by the ground over which the big-horn were said to wander, while my foreman, Merrifield, and myself would take saddle-horses, and each day ride to the country through which we intended to hunt, returning at night to the buck-board and hut. But we started a little sooner than we had intended, owing to a funny mistake made by one of the cowboys.

The sun did not rise until nearly eight, but each morning we breakfasted at five, and the men were then sent out on the horses which had been kept in overnight, to find and drive home the pony band; of course they started in perfect darkness, except for the starlight. On the last day of our proposed stay the men had come in with the ponies before sunrise; and, leaving the latter in the corral, they entered the house and crowded round the fire, stamping and beating their numbed hands together. In the

midst of the confusion word was brought by one of the cowboys, that while hunting for the horses he had seen two bears go down into a wash-out; and he told us that he could bring us right to the place where he had seen them, for as soon as he left it he had come in at speed on his swift, iron-gray horse—a vicious, clean-limbed devil, with muscles like bundles of tense wire; the cold had made the brute savage, and it had been punished with the cruel curb bit until long, bloody icicles hung from its lips.

At once Merrifield and I mounted in hot haste and rode off with the bringer of good tidings, leaving hasty instructions where we were to be joined by the buck-board. The sun was still just below the horizon as we started, wrapped warmly in our fur coats and with our caps drawn down over our ears to keep out the cold. The cattle were standing in the thickets and sheltered ravines, huddled together with their heads down, the frost lying on their backs and the icicles hanging from their muzzles; they stared at

us as we rode along, but were too cold to move a hand's breadth out of our way; indeed it is a marvel how they survive the winter at all. Our course at first lay up a long valley, cut up by cattle trails; then we came out, just as the sun had risen, upon the rounded, gently-sloping highlands, thickly clad with the short, nutritious grass, which curls on the stalk into good hay, and on which the cattle feed during winter. We galloped rapidly over the hills, our blood gradually warming up from the motion; and soon came to the long wash-out, cutting down like a miniature canyon for a space of two or three miles through the bottom of a valley, into which the cowboy said he had seen the bears go. One of us took one side and one the other, and we rode along up wind, but neither the bears nor any traces of them could we see; at last, half a mile ahead of us, two dark objects suddenly emerged from the wash-out, and came out on the plain. For a second we thought they were the quarry; then we saw that they were

merely a couple of dark-colored ponies. The cowboy's chapfallen face was a study; he had seen, in the dim light, the two ponies going down with their heads held near the ground, and had mistaken them for bears (by no means the unnatural mistake that it seems; I have known an experienced hunter fire twice at a black calf in the late evening, thinking it was a bear). He knew only too well the merciless chaff to which he would be henceforth exposed; and a foretaste of which he at once received from my companion. The ponies had strayed from the main herd, and the cowboy was sent back to drive them to the home corral, while Merrifield and myself continued our hunt.

We had all day before us, and but twenty miles or so to cover before reaching the hut where the buck-board was to meet us; but the course we intended to take was through country so rough that no Eastern horse could cross it, and even the hardy Western hunting-ponies, who climb like goats, would have difficulty in keeping their feet. Our route

lay through the heart of the Bad Lands, but of course the country was not equally rough in all parts. There were tracts of varying size, each covered with a tangled mass of chains and peaks, the buttes in places reaching a height that would in the East entitle them to be called mountains. Every such tract was riven in all directions by deep chasms and narrow ravines, whose sides sometimes rolled off in gentle slopes, but far more often rose as sheer cliffs, with narrow ledges along their fronts. A sparse growth of grass covered certain portions of these lands, and on some of the steep hillsides, or in the canyons were scanty groves of coniferous evergreens, so stunted by the thin soil and bleak weather that many of them were bushes rather than trees. Most of the peaks and ridges, and many of the valleys, were entirely bare of vegetation, and these had been cut by wind and water into the strangest and most fantastic shapes. Indeed it is difficult, in looking at such formations, to get rid of the feeling that their

curiously twisted and contorted forms are due to some vast volcanic upheavals or other subterranean forces; yet they are merely caused by the action of the various weathering forces of the dry climate on the different strata of sandstones, clays, and marls. Isolated columns shoot up into the air, bearing on their summits flat rocks like tables; square buttes tower high above surrounding depressions, which are so cut up by twisting gullies and low ridges as to be almost impassable; shelving masses of sandstone jut out over the sides of the cliffs; some of the ridges, with perfectly perpendicular sides, are so worn away that they stand up like gigantic knife blades; and gulches, washouts, and canyons dig out the sides of each butte, while between them are thrust out long spurs, with sharp ragged tops. All such patches of barren, broken ground, where the feed seems too scant to support any large animal, are the favorite haunts of the big-horn, though it also wanders far into the some-

what gentler and more fertile, but still very rugged, domain of the black-tail deer.

Between all such masses of rough country lay wide, grassy plateaus or long stretches of bare plain, covered with pebbly shingle. We loped across all these open places; and when we came to a reach of broken country would leave our horses and hunt through it on foot. Except where the wind had blown it off, there was a thin coat of snow over every thing, and the icy edges and sides of the cliffs gave only slippery and uncertain foothold, so as to render the climbing doubly toilsome. Hunting the big-horn is at all times the hardest and most difficult kind of sport, and is equally trying to both wind and muscle; and for that very reason the big-horn ranks highest among all the species of game that are killed by still-hunting, and its chase constitutes the noblest form of sport with the rifle, always excepting, of course, those kinds of hunting where the quarry is itself dangerous to attack. Climb-

ing kept us warm in spite of the bitter weather; we only wore our fur coats and shaps while on horseback, leaving them where we left the horses, and doing our still-hunting in buckskin shirts, fur caps, and stout shoes.

Big-horn, more commonly known as mountain sheep, are extremely wary and cautious animals, and are plentiful in but few places. This is rather surprising, for they seem to be fairly prolific (although not as much so as deer and antelope), and comparatively few are killed by the hunters; indeed, much fewer are shot than of any other kind of western game in proportion to their numbers. They hold out in a place long after the elk and buffalo have been exterminated, and for many years after both of these have become things of the past the big-horn will still exist to afford sport to the man who is a hardy mountaineer and skilful with the rifle. For it is the only kind of game on whose haunts cattle do not trespass. Good buffalo or elk pasture is sure

to be also good pasture for steers and cows; and in summer the herds of the ranchman wander far into the prairies of the antelope, while in winter their chosen and favorite resorts are those of which the black-tail is equally fond. Thus, the cattle-men are almost as much foes of these kinds of game as are the hunters, but neither cattle nor cowboys penetrate into the sterile and rocky wastes where the big-horn is found. And it is too wary game, and the labor of following it is too great, for it ever to be much persecuted by the skin or market hunters.

In size the big-horn comes next to buffalo and elk, averaging larger than the black-tail deer, while an old ram will sometimes be almost as heavy as a small cow elk. In his movements he is not light and graceful like the prong-horn and other antelopes, his marvellous agility seeming rather to proceed from sturdy strength and wonderful command over iron sinews and muscles. The huge horns are carried proudly erect by the massive neck; every motion of the body is

made with perfect poise; and there seems to be no ground so difficult that the big-horn cannot cross it. There is probably no animal in the world his superior in climbing; and his only equals are the other species of mountain sheep and the ibexes. No matter how sheer the cliff, if there are ever so tiny cracks or breaks in the surface, the big-horn will bound up or down it with wonderful ease and seeming absence of effort. The perpendicular bounds it can make are truly startling —in strong contrast with its distant relative the prong-horn which can leap almost any level jump but seems unable to clear the smallest height. In descending a sheer wall of rock the big-horn holds all four feet together and goes down in long jumps, bounding off the surface almost like a rubber ball every time he strikes it. The way that one will vanish over the roughest and most broken ground is a perpetual surprise to any one that has hunted them; and the ewes are quite as skilful as the rams, while even the very young lambs seem almost as well able

to climb, and certainly follow wherever their elders lead. Time and again one will rush over a cliff to what appears certain death, and will gallop away from the bottom unharmed. Their perfect self-confidence seems to be justified, however, for they never slip or make a misstep, even on the narrowest ledges when covered with ice and snow. And all their marvellous jumping and climbing is done with an apparent ease that renders it the more wonderful. Rapid though the movements of one are they are made without any of the nervous hurry so characteristic of the antelopes and smaller deer; the on-looker is really as much impressed with the animal's sinewy power and self-command as with his agility. His strength and his self-reliance seem to fit him above all other kinds of game to battle with the elements and with his brute foes; he does not care to have the rough ways of his life made smooth; were his choice free his abode would still be the vast and lonely wilderness in which he is found. To him the barren wastes of the Bad Lands

offer a most attractive home; yet to other living creatures they are at all times as grimly desolate and forbidding as any spot on earth can be; at all seasons they seem hostile to every form of life. In the raging heat of summer the dry earth cracks and crumbles, and the sultry, lifeless air sways and trembles as if above a furnace. Through the high, clear atmosphere, the intense sunlight casts unnaturally deep shadows; and where there are no shadows, brings out in glaring relief the weird, fantastic shapes and bizarre coloring of the buttes. In winter snow and ice coat the thin crests and sharp sides of the cliffs, and increase their look of savage wildness; the cold turns the ground into ringing iron; and the icy blasts sweep through the clefts and over the ridges with an angry fury even more terrible than is the intense, death-like, silent heat of midsummer. But the mountain ram is alike proudly indifferent to the hottest summer sun and to the wildest winter storm.

The lambs are brought forth late in May

or early in June. Like the antelope, the dam soon leads her kids to join the herd, which may range in size from a dozen to four or five times as many individuals, generally approaching nearer the former number. The ewes, lambs, and yearling or two-year-old rams go together. The young but full-grown rams keep in small parties of three or four, while the old fellows, with monstrous heads, keep by themselves, except when they join the ewes in the rutting season. At this time they wage savage war with each other. The horns of the old rams are always battered and scarred from these butting contests—which appearance, by the way, has given rise to the ridiculous idea that they were in the habit of jumping over precipices and landing on their heads.

Occasionally the big-horn come down into the valleys or along the grassy slopes to feed, but this is not often, and in such cases every member of the band is always keeping the sharpest look-out, and at the slightest alarm they beat a retreat to their broken fast-

nesses. At night-time or in the early morning they come down to drink at the small pools or springs, but move off the instant they have satisfied their thirst. As a rule, they spend their time among the rocks and rough ground, and it is in these places that they must be hunted. They cover a good deal of ground when feeding, for the feed is scanty in their haunts, and they walk quite rapidly along the ledges or peaks, by preference high up, as they graze or browse. When through feeding they always choose as a resting-place some point from which they can command a view over all the surrounding territory. An old ram is peculiarly wary. The crest of a ridge or the top of a peak is a favorite resting-bed; but even more often they choose some ledge, high up, but just below the crest, or lie on a shelf of rock that juts out from where a ridge ends, and thus enables them to view the country on three sides of them. In color they harmonize curiously with the grayish or yellowish brown of the ground on which they are

found, and it is often very difficult to make them out when lying motionless on a ledge of rock. Time and again they will be mistaken for boulders, and, on the other hand, I have more than once stalked up to masses of sandstone that I have mistaken for sheep.

When lying down the big-horn can thus scan every thing below it; and both while feeding and resting it invariably keeps the sharpest possible look-out for all danger from beneath, and this trait makes it needful for the hunter to always keep on the highest ground and try to come on it from above. For protection against danger it relies on ears, eyes, and nose alike. The slightest sound startles it and puts it on its guard, while if it sees or smells any thing which it deems may bode danger it is off like a flash. It is as wary and quick-sighted as the antelope, and its senses are as keen as are those of the elk, while it is not afflicted by the occasional stupidity nor heedless recklessness of these two animals, nor by the intense curiosity of the black-tail, and it has all the

white-tail's sound common-sense, coupled with a much shyer nature and much sharper faculties, so that it is more difficult to kill than are any of these creatures. And the climbing is rendered all the more tiresome by the traits above spoken of, which make it necessary for the hunter to keep above it. The first thing to do is to clamber up to the top of a ridge, and after that to keep on the highest crests.

At all times, and with all game, the still-hunter should be quiet, and should observe caution, but when after mountain sheep he must be absolutely noiseless and must not neglect a single chance. He must be careful not to step on a loose stone or to start any crumbling earth; he must always hunt up or across wind, and he must take advantage of every crag or boulder to shelter himself from the gaze of his watchful quarry. While keeping up as high as possible, he should not go on the very summit, as that brings him out in too sharp relief against the sky. And all the while he will be crossing land where

he will need to pay good heed to his own footing or else run the risk of breaking his neck.

As far as lay in us, on our first day's hunt we paid proper heed to all the rules of hunting-craft; but without success. Up the slippery, ice-covered buttes we clambered, clinging to the rocks, and slowly working our way across the faces of the cliffs, or cautiously creeping along the narrow ledges, peering over every crest long and carefully, and from the peaks scanning the ground all about with the field-glasses. But we saw no sheep, and but little sign of them. Still we did see some sign, and lost a shot, either through bad luck or bad management. This was while going through a cluster of broken buttes, whose peaks rose up like sharp cones. On reaching the top of one at the leeward end, we worked cautiously up the side, seeing nothing, to the other end, and then down along the middle. When about half-way back we came across the fresh footprints of a ewe or yearling ram in a little patch of

snow. On tracing them back we found that it had been lying down on the other side of a small bluff, within a hundred yards of where we had passed, and must have either got our wind, or else have heard us make some noise. At any rate it had gone off, and though we followed its tracks a little in the snow, they soon got on the bare, frozen ground and we lost them.

After that we saw nothing. The cold, as the day wore on, seemed gradually to chill us through and through; our hands and feet became numb, and our ears tingled under our fur caps. We hunted carefully through two or three masses of jagged buttes which seemed most likely places for the game we were after, taking a couple of hours to each place; and then, as the afternoon was beginning to wane, mounted our shivering horses for good, and pushed toward the bend of the river where we were to meet the buck-board. Our course lay across a succession of bleak, wind-swept plateaus, broken by deep and narrow pine-clad gorges. We galloped

swiftly over the plateaus, where the footing was good and the going easy, for the gales had driven the feathery snow off the withered brown grass; but getting on and off these table-lands was often a real labor, their sides were so sheer. The horses plunged and scrambled after us as we led them up; while in descending they would sit back on their haunches and half-walk, half-slide, down the steep inclines. Indeed, one or two of the latter were so very straight that the horses would not face them, and we had to turn them round and back them over the edge, and then all go down with a rush. At any rate it warmed our blood to keep out of the way of the hoofs. On one of the plateaus I got a very long shot at a black-tail, which I missed.

Finally we struck the head of a long, winding valley with a smooth bottom, and after cantering down it four or five miles, came to the river, just after the cold, pale-red sun had sunk behind the line of hills ahead of us. Our horses were sharp shod,

and crossed the ice without difficulty; and in a grove of leafless cotton-woods, on the opposite side, we found the hut for which we had been making, the cowboy already inside with the fire started. Throughout the night the temperature sank lower and lower, and it was impossible to keep the crazy old hut anywhere near freezing-point; the wind whistled through the chinks and crannies of the logs, and, after a short and by no means elaborate supper, we were glad to cower down with our great fur coats still on, under the pile of buffalo robes and bear skins. My sleeping-bag came in very handily, and kept me as warm as possible, in spite of the bitter frost.

We were up and had taken breakfast next morning by the time the first streak of dawn had dimmed the brilliancy of the stars, and immediately afterwards strode off on foot, as we had been hampered by the horses on the day before. We walked briskly across the plain until, by the time it was light enough to see to shoot, we came to the foot

of a great hill, known as Middle Butte, a huge, isolated mass of rock, several miles in length, and with high sides, very steep towards the nearly level summit; it would be deemed a mountain of no inconsiderable size in the East. We hunted carefully through the outlying foothills and projecting spurs around its base, without result, finding but a few tracks, and those very old ones, and then toiled up to the top, which, though narrow in parts, in others widened out into plateaus half a mile square. Having made a complete circuit of the top, peering over the edge and closely examining the flanks of the butte with the field-glass, without having seen any thing, we slid down the other side and took off through a streak of very rugged but low country. This day, though the weather had grown even colder, we did not feel it, for we walked all the while with a quick pace, and the climbing was very hard work. The shoulders and ledges of the cliffs had become round and slippery with the ice, and it was no easy task to move up and

along them, clutching the gun in one hand, and grasping each little projection with the other. Climbing through the Bad Lands is just like any other kind of mountaineering, except that the precipices and chasms are much lower; but this really makes very little difference when the ground is frozen as solid as iron, for it would be almost as unpleasant to fall fifty feet as to fall two hundred, and the result to the person who tried it would be very much the same in each case.

Hunting for a day or two without finding game where the work is severe and toilsome, is a good test of the sportsman's staying qualities; the man who at the end of the time is proceeding with as much caution and determination as at the beginning, has got the right stuff in him. On this day I got rather tired, and committed one of the blunders of which no hunter ought ever to be guilty; that is, I fired at small game while on ground where I might expect large. We had seen two or three jack-rabbits scudding off like

noiseless white shadows, and finally came upon some sharp-tail prairie fowl in a hollow. One was quite near me, perched on a bush, and with its neck stretched up offered a beautiful mark; I could not resist it, so knelt and fired. At the report of the rifle (it was a miss, by the by) a head suddenly appeared over a ridge some six hundred yards in front—too far off for us to make out what kind of animal it belonged to,—looked fixedly at us, and then disappeared. We feared it might be a mountain sheep, and that my unlucky shot had deprived us of the chance of a try at it; but on hurrying up to the place where it had been we were relieved to find that the tracks were only those of a black-tail. After this lesson we proceeded in silence, making a long circle through the roughest kind of country. When on the way back to camp, where the buttes rose highest and steepest, we came upon fresh tracks, but as it was then late in the afternoon, did not try to follow them that day. When near the hut I killed a sharp-

tail for supper, making rather a neat shot, the bird being eighty yards off. The night was even colder than the preceding one, and all signs told us that we would soon have a change for the worse in the weather, which made me doubly anxious to get a sheep before the storm struck us. We determined that next morning we would take the horses and make a quick push for the chain of high buttes where we had seen the fresh tracks, and hunt them through with thorough care.

We started in the cold gray of the next morning and pricked rapidly off over the frozen plain, columns of white steam rising from the nostrils of the galloping horses. When we reached the foot of the hills where we intended to hunt, and had tethered the horses, the sun had already risen, but it was evident that the clear weather of a fortnight past was over. The air was thick and hazy, and away off in the northwest a towering mass of grayish white clouds looked like a weather-breeder; every thing boded a storm at no distant date. The country over which

we now hunted was wilder and more mountainous than any we had yet struck. High, sharp peaks and ridges broke off abruptly into narrow gorges and deep ravines; they were bare of all but the scantiest vegetation, save on some of the sheltered sides where grew groves of dark pines, now laden down with feathery snow. The climbing was as hard as ever. At first we went straight up the side of the tallest peak, and then along the knife-like ridge which joined it with the next. The ice made the footing very slippery as we stepped along the ledges or crawled round the jutting shoulders, and we had to look carefully for our footholds; while in the cold, thin air every quick burst we made up a steep hill caused us to pant for breath. We had gone but a little way before we saw fresh signs of the animals we were after, but it was some time before we came upon the quarry itself.

We left the high ground and descending into a narrow chasm walked along its bottom, which was but a couple of feet wide,

while the sides rose up from it at an acute angle. After following this for a few hundred yards, we turned a sharp corner, and shortly afterward our eyes were caught by some grains of fresh earth lying on the snow in front of our feet. On the sides, some feet above our heads, were marks in the snow which a moment's glance showed us had been made by a couple of mountain sheep that had come down one side of the gorge and had leaped across to the other, their sharp toes going through the thin snow and displacing the earth that had fallen to the bottom. The tracks had evidently been made just before we rounded the corner, and as we had been advancing noiselessly on the snow with the wind in our favor, we knew that the animals could have no suspicion of our presence. They had gone up the cliff on our right, but as that on our left was much lower, and running for some distance parallel to the other, we concluded that by running along its top we would be most certain to get a good shot. Clambering in-

stantly up the steep side, digging my hands and feet into the loose snow, and grasping at every little rock or frozen projection, I reached the top; and then ran forward along the ridge a few paces, crouching behind the masses of queerly-shaped sandstone; and saw, about ninety yards off across the ravine, a couple of mountain rams. The one with the largest horns was broadside toward me, his sturdy, massive form outlined clearly against the sky, as he stood on the crest of the ridge. I dropped on my knee, raising the rifle as I did so; for a second he did not quite make me out, turning his head half round to look. I held the sight fairly on the point just behind his shoulder and pulled the trigger. At the report he staggered and pitched forward, but recovered himself and crossed over the ridge out of sight. We jumped and slid down into the ravine again, and clambered up the opposite side as fast as our lungs and the slippery ice would let us; then taking the trail of the wounded ram we trotted along it. We had

not far to go; for, as I expected, we found him lying on his side a couple of hundred yards beyond the ridge, his eyes already glazed in death. The bullet had gone in behind the shoulder and ranged clean through his body crosswise, going a little forward; no animal less tough than a mountain ram could have gone any distance at all with such a wound. He had most obligingly run round to a part of the hill where we could bring up one of the horses without very much difficulty. Accordingly I brought up old Manitou, who can carry any thing and has no fear, and the big-horn was soon strapped across his back. It was a fine ram, with perfectly-shaped but not very large horns.

The other ram, two years old, with small horns, had bounded over the ridge before I could get a shot at him; we followed his trail for half a mile, but as he showed no signs of halting, and we were anxious to get home we then gave up the pursuit.

It was still early in the day, and we made

up our minds to push back for the home ranch, as we did not wish to be caught out in a long storm. The lowering sky was already overcast by a mass of leaden-gray clouds; and it was evident that we had no time to lose. In a little over an hour we were back at the log camp, where the ram was shifted from Manitou's back to the buckboard. A very few minutes sufficed to pack up our bedding and provisions, and we started home. Merrifield and I rode on ahead, not sparing the horses; but before we got home the storm had burst, and a furious blizzard blew in our teeth as we galloped along the last mile of the river bottom, before coming to the home ranch house; and as we warmed our stiffened limbs before the log fire, I congratulated myself upon the successful outcome of what I knew would be the last hunting trip I should take during that season.

The death of this ram was accomplished without calling for any very good shooting

on our part. He was standing still, less than a hundred yards off, when the shot was fired; and we came across him so close merely by accident. Still, we fairly deserved our luck, for we had hunted with the most patient and painstaking care from dawn till nightfall for the better part of three days, spending most of the time in climbing at a smart rate of speed up sheer cliffs and over rough and slippery ground. Still-hunting the big-horn is always a toilsome and laborious task, and the very bitter weather during which we had been out had not lessened the difficulty of the work, though in the cold it was much less exhausting than it would have been to have hunted across the same ground in summer. No other kind of hunting does as much to bring out the good qualities, both moral and physical, of the sportsmen who follow it. If a man keeps at it, it is bound to make him both hardy and resolute; to strengthen his muscles and fill out his lungs.

Mountain mutton is in the fall the most

delicious eating furnished by any game animal. Nothing else compares with it for juiciness, tenderness, and flavor: but at all other times of the year it is tougn, stringy, and worthless.

CHAPTER III

THE LORDLY BUFFALO

GONE forever are the mighty herds of the lordly buffalo. A few solitary individuals and small bands are still to be found scattered here and there in the wilder parts of the plains; and though most of these will be very soon destroyed, others will for some years fight off their doom and lead a precarious existence either in remote and almost desert portions of the country near the Mexican frontier, or else in the wildest and most inaccessible fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains; but the great herds, that for the first three quarters of this century formed the distinguishing and characteristic feature of the Western plains, have vanished forever.

It is only about a hundred years ago that

the white man, in his march westward, first encroached upon the lands of the buffalo, for these animals had never penetrated in any number to the Appalachian chain of mountains. Indeed, it was after the beginning of the century before the inroads of the whites upon them grew at all serious. Then, though constantly driven westward, the diminution in their territory, if sure, was at least slow, although growing progressively more rapid. Less than a score of years ago the great herds, containing many millions of individuals, ranged over a vast expanse of country that stretched in an unbroken line from near Mexico to far into British America; in fact, over almost all the plains that are now known as the cattle region. But since that time their destruction has gone on with appalling rapidity and thoroughness; and the main factors in bringing it about have been the railroads, which carried hordes of hunters into the land and gave them means to transport their spoils to market. Not quite twenty years since, the

range was broken in two, and the buffalo herds in the middle slaughtered or thrust aside; and thus there resulted two ranges, the northern and the southern. The latter was the larger, but being more open to the hunters, was the sooner to be depopulated; and the last of the great southern herds was destroyed in 1878, though scattered bands escaped and wandered into the desolate wastes to the southwest. Meanwhile equally savage war was waged on the northern herds, and five years later the last of these was also destroyed or broken up. The bulk of this slaughter was done in the dozen years from 1872 to 1883; never before in all history were so many large wild animals of one species slain in so short a space of time.

The extermination of the buffalo has been a veritable tragedy of the animal world. Other races of animals have been destroyed within historic times, but these have been species of small size, local distribution, and limited numbers, usually found in some particular island or group of islands; while the

huge buffalo, in countless myriads, ranged over the greater part of a continent. Its nearest relative, the Old World aurochs, formerly found all through the forests of Europe, is almost as near the verge of extinction, but with the latter the process has been slow, and has extended over a period of a thousand years, instead of being compressed into a dozen. The destruction of the various larger species of South African game is much more local, and is proceeding at a much slower rate. It may truthfully be said that the sudden and complete extermination of the vast herds of the buffalo is without a parallel in historic times.

No sight is more common on the plains than that of a bleached buffalo skull; and their countless numbers attest the abundance of the animal at a time not so very long past. On those portions where the herds made their last stand, the carcasses, dried in the clear, high air, or the mouldering skeletons, abound. Last year, in crossing the country around the heads of the Big

Sandy, O'Fallon Creek, Little Beaver, and Box Alder, these skeletons or dried carcasses were in sight from every hillock, often lying over the ground so thickly that several score could be seen at once. A ranchman who at the same time had made a journey of a thousand miles across Northern Montana, along the Milk River, told me that, to use his own expression, during the whole distance he was never out of sight of a dead buffalo, and never in sight of a live one.

Thus, though gone, the traces of the buffalo are still thick over the land. Their dried dung is found everywhere, and is in many places the only fuel afforded by the plains; their skulls, which last longer than any other part of the animal, are among the most familiar of objects to the plainsman; their bones are in many districts so plentiful that it has become a regular industry, followed by hundreds of men (christened "bone hunters" by the frontiersmen), to go out with wagons and collect them in great

numbers for the sake of the phosphates they yield; and Bad Lands, plateaus, and prairies alike, are cut up in all directions by the deep ruts which were formerly buffalo trails.

These buffalo trails were made by the herds travelling strung out in single file, and invariably taking the same route each time they passed over the same piece of ground. As a consequence, many of the ruts are worn so deeply into the ground that a horseman riding along one strikes his stirrups on the earth. In moving through very broken country they are often good guides; for though buffalo can go easily over the roughest places, they prefer to travel where it is smooth, and have a remarkable knack at finding out the best passage down a steep ravine, over a broken cliff, or along a divide. In a pass, or, as it is called in the West, "draw," between two feeding grounds, through which the buffalo were fond of going, fifteen or twenty deep trails may be seen; and often, where the great beasts have travelled in parallel files, two ruts will run

side by side over the prairie for a mile's length. These old trails are frequently used by the cattle herds at the present time, or are even turned into pony paths by the ranchmen. For many long years after the buffalo die out from a place, their white skulls and well-worn roads remain as melancholy monuments of their former existence.

The rapid and complete extermination of the buffalo affords an excellent instance of how a race, that has thriven and multiplied for ages under conditions of life to which it has slowly fitted itself by a process of natural selection continued for countless generations, may succumb at once when these surrounding conditions are varied by the introduction of one or more new elements, immediately becoming the chief forces with which it has to contend in the struggle for life. The most striking characteristics of the buffalo, and those which had been found most useful in maintaining the species until the white man entered upon the scene, were its phenomenal gregariousness—surpassed

by no other four-footed beast, and only equalled, if equalled at all, by one or two kinds of South African antelope,—its massive bulk, and unwieldy strength. The fact that it was a plains and not a forest or mountain animal was at that time also greatly in its favor. Its toughness and hardy endurance fitted it to contend with purely natural forces: to resist cold and the winter blasts, or the heat of a thirsty summer, to wander away to new pastures when the feed on the old was exhausted, to plunge over broken ground, and to plough its way through snow-drifts or quagmires. But one beast of prey existed sufficiently powerful to conquer it when full grown and in health; and this, the grizzly bear, could only be considered an occasional foe. The Indians were its most dangerous enemies, but they were without horses, and their weapons, bows and arrows, were only available at close range; so that a slight degree of speed enabled buffalo to get out of the way of their human foes when discovered, and on the

open plains a moderate development of the senses was sufficient to warn them of the approach of the latter before they had come up to the very close distance required for their primitive weapons to take effect. Thus the strength, size, and gregarious habits of the brute were sufficient for a protection against most foes; and a slight degree of speed and moderate development of the senses served as adequate guards against the grizzlies and bow-bearing foot Indians. Concealment and the habit of seeking lonely and remote places for a dwelling would have been of no service.

But the introduction of the horse, and shortly afterwards the incoming of white hunters carrying long-range rifles, changed all this. The buffaloes' gregarious habits simply rendered them certain to be seen, and made it a matter of perfect ease to follow them up; their keeping to the open plains heightened their conspicuousness, while their senses were too dull to discover their foes at such a distance as to nullify the ef-

fects of the long rifles; their speed was not such as to enable them to flee from a horseman; and their size and strength merely made them too clumsy either to escape from or to contend with their foes. Add to this the fact that their hides and flesh were valuable, and it is small wonder that under the new order of things they should have vanished with such rapidity.

The incoming of the cattle-men was another cause of the completeness of their destruction. Wherever there is good feed for a buffalo, there is good feed for a steer or cow; and so the latter have penetrated into all the pastures of the former; and of course the cowboys follow. A cowboy is not able to kill a deer or antelope unless in exceptional cases, for they are too fleet, too shy, or keep themselves too well hidden. But a buffalo neither tries nor is able to do much in the way of hiding itself; its senses are too dull to give it warning in time; and it is not so swift as a horse, so that a cowboy, riding round in the places where cattle, and there-

fore buffalo, are likely to be, is pretty sure to see any of the latter that may be about, and then can easily approach near enough to be able to overtake them when they begin running. The size and value of the animal makes the chase after it very keen. Hunters will follow the trail of a band for days, when they would not follow that of deer or antelope for a half hour.

Events have developed a race of this species, known either as the wood or mountain buffalo, which is acquiring, and has already largely acquired, habits widely different from those of the others of its kind. It is found in the wooded and most precipitous portions of the mountains, instead of on the level and open plains; it goes singly or in small parties, instead of in huge herds; and it is more agile and infinitely more wary than is its prairie cousin. The formation of this race is due solely to the extremely severe process of natural selection that has been going on among the buffalo herds for the last sixty or seventy years; the vast ma-

jority of the individuals were utterly unable to accommodate themselves to the sudden and complete change in the surrounding forces with which they had to cope, and therefore died out; while a very few of the more active and wary, and of those most given to wandering off into mountainous and out-of-the-way places, in each generation survived, and among these the wariness continually increased, partly by personal experience, and still more by inheriting an increasingly suspicious nature from their ancestors. The sense of smell always was excellent in the buffalo; the sense of hearing becomes much quicker in any woods animal than it is in one found on the plains; while in beasts of the forest the eyesight does not have to be as keen as is necessary for their protection in open country. On the mountains the hair grows longer and denser, and the form rather more thickset. As a result, a new race has been built up; and we have an animal far better fitted to "harmonize with the environment," to use the scientific

cant of the day. Unfortunately this race has developed too late. With the settlement of the country it will also disappear, unless very stringent laws are made for its protection; but at least its existence will for some years prevent the total extermination of the species as a whole. It must be kept in mind that even this shyer kind of buffalo has not got the keen senses of other large game, such as moose; and it is more easily followed and much more keenly and eagerly sought after than would be any other animal smaller and less valuable to the hunter than itself.

While the slaughter of the buffalo has been in places needless and brutal, and while it is to be greatly regretted that the species is likely to become extinct, and while, moreover, from a purely selfish standpoint many, including myself, would rather see it continue to exist as the chief feature in the unchanged life of the Western wilderness; yet, on the other hand, it must be remembered that its continued existence in any numbers

was absolutely incompatible with any thing but a very sparse settlement of the country; and that its destruction was the condition precedent upon the advance of white civilization in the West, and was a positive boon to the more thrifty and industrious frontiersmen. Where the buffalo were plenty, they ate up all the grass that could have supported cattle. The country over which the huge herds grazed during the last year or two of their existence was cropped bare, and the grass did not grow to its normal height and become able to support cattle for, in some cases two, in others three, seasons. Every buffalo needed as much food as an ox or cow; and if the former abounded, the latter perforce would have to be scarce. Above all, the extermination of the buffalo was the only way of solving the Indian question. As long as this large animal of the chase existed, the Indians simply could not be kept on reservations, and always had an ample supply of meat on hand to support them in the event of a war; and its disappearance

was the only method of forcing them to at least partially abandon their savage mode of life. From the standpoint of humanity at large, the extermination of the buffalo has been a blessing. The many have been benefited by it; and I suppose the comparatively few of us who would have preferred the continuance of the old order of things, merely for the sake of our own selfish enjoyment, have no right to complain.

The buffalo is easier killed than is any other kind of plains game; but its chase is very far from being the tame amusement it has been lately represented. It is genuine sport; it needs skill, marksmanship, and hardihood in the man who follows it, and if he hunts on horseback, it needs also pluck and good riding. It is in no way akin to various forms of so-called sport in vogue in parts of the East, such as killing deer in a lake or by fire hunting, or even by watching at a runaway. No man who is not of an adventurous temper, and able to stand rough food and living, will penetrate to the haunts

of the buffalo. The animal is so tough and tenacious of life that it must be hit in the right spot; and care must be used in approaching it, for its nose is very keen, and though its sight is dull, yet, on the other hand, the plains it frequents are singularly bare of cover; while, finally, there is just a faint spice of danger in the pursuit, for the bison, though the least dangerous of all bovine animals, will, on occasions, turn upon the hunter, and though its attack is, as a rule, easily avoided, yet in rare cases it manages to charge home. A ranchman of my acquaintance once, many years ago, went out buffalo hunting on horseback, together with a friend who was unused to the sport, and who was mounted on a large, untrained, nervous horse. While chasing a bull, the friend's horse became unmanageable, and when the bull turned, proved too clumsy to get out of the way, and was caught on the horns, one of which entered its flank, while the other inflicted a huge, bruised gash across the man's thigh, tearing the muscles

all out. Both horse and rider were flung to the ground with tremendous violence. The horse had to be killed, and the man died in a few hours from the shock, loss of blood, and internal injuries. Such an accident, however, is very exceptional.

My brother was in at the death of the great southern herds in 1877, and had a good deal of experience in buffalo hunting; and once or twice was charged by old bulls, but never had any difficulty in either evading the charge or else killing the brute as it came on. My cousin, John Roosevelt, also had one adventure with a buffalo, in which he received rather a fright. He had been out on foot with a dog and had severely wounded a buffalo bull, which nevertheless, with the wonderful tenacity of life and ability to go over apparently inaccessible places that this species shows, managed to clamber up a steep, almost perpendicular, cliff. My cousin climbed up after it, with some difficulty; on reaching the top he got his elbows over and drew himself up on them only to

find the buffalo fronting him with lowered head not a dozen feet off. Immediately upon seeing him it cocked up its tail and came forward. He was clinging with both hands to the edge and could not use his rifle; so, not relishing what was literally a tête-à-tête, he promptly let go and slid or rather rolled head over heels to the foot of the cliff, not hurting himself much in the sand, though of course a good deal jarred by the fall. The buffalo came on till its hoofs crumbled the earth at the brink, when the dog luckily got up and distracted its attention; meanwhile, my cousin, having bounced down to the bottom, picked himself up, shook himself, and finding that nothing was broken, promptly scrambled up the bluff at another place a few yards off and shot his antagonist.

When my cattle first came on the Little Missouri three of my men took a small bunch of them some fifty miles to the south and there wintered with them, on what were then the outskirts of the buffalo range, the

herds having been pressed up northwards. In the intervals of tending the cattle—work which was then entirely new to them—they occupied themselves in hunting buffalo, killing during the winter sixty or seventy, some of them on horseback, but mostly by still-hunting them on foot. Once or twice the bulls when wounded turned to bay; and a couple of them on one occasion charged one of the men and forced him to take refuge upon a steep isolated butte. At another time the three of them wounded a cow so badly that she broke down and would run no farther, turning to bay in a small clump of thick trees. As this would have been a very bad place in which to skin the body, they wished to get her out and tried to tease her into charging; but she seemed too weak to make the effort. Emboldened by her apathy one of the men came up close to her behind, while another was standing facing her; and the former finally entered the grove of trees and poked her with a long stick. This waked her up most

effectually, and instead of turning on her assailant she went headlong at the man in front. He leaped to one side just in time, one of her horns grazing him, ripping away his clothes and knocking him over; as he lay she tried to jump on him with her fore-feet, but he rolled to one side, and as she went past she kicked at him like a vicious mule. The effort exhausted her, however, and she fell before going a dozen yards farther. The man who was charged had rather a close shave; thanks to the rashness and contempt of the game's prowess which they all felt—for all three are very quiet men and not afraid of any thing. It is always a good rule to be cautious in dealing with an apparently dead or dying buffalo. About the time the above incident occurred a party of hunters near my ranch killed a buffalo, as they thought, and tied a pony to its foreleg, to turn it over, as its position was a very bad one for skinning. Barely had the pony been tied when the buffalo came to with a jump, killed the unfortunate pony, and

needed a dozen more balls before he fell for good.

At that time the buffalo would occasionally be scattered among the cattle, but, as a rule, avoided the latter and seemed to be afraid of them; while the cattle, on the contrary, had no apparent dread of the buffalo, unless it happened that on some occasion they got caught by a herd of the latter that had stampeded. A settler or small ranchman, not far from my place, was driving in a team of oxen in a wagon one day three years since, when, in crossing a valley, he encountered a little herd of stampeded buffalo, who, in their blind and heedless terror, ran into him and knocked over the wagon and oxen. The oxen never got over the fright the rough handling caused them, and ever afterward became unmanageable and tore off at sight or smell of a buffalo. It is said that the few buffalo left in the country through which the head waters of the Belle Fourche flow, have practically

joined themselves to the great herds of cattle now found all over that region.

Buffalo are very easily tamed. On a neighboring ranch there are four which were taken when very young calves. They wander about with the cattle, and are quite as familiar as any of them, and do not stray any farther away. One of them was captured when a yearling, by the help of a large yellow hound. The cowboy had been chasing it some time and, finally, fearing it might escape, hied on the hound, which dashed in, caught the buffalo by the ear, and finally brought it down to its knees, when the cowboy, by means of his lariat secured it, and, with the help of a companion, managed to get it back to the ranch. Buffalo can be trained to draw a wagon, and are valuable for their great strength; but they are very headstrong and stupid. If thirsty, for instance, and they smell or see water, it is absolutely impossible to prevent their going to it, no matter if it is in such a place that

they have to upset the wagon to get down to it, nor how deep the mud is. When tamed they do not seem to be as ferocious as ordinary cattle that are allowed to go free; but they are such strong, blundering brutes that very few fences will hold them.

My men, in hunting buffalo, which was with them an occasional occupation and not a regular pursuit, used light Winchesters; but the professional buffalo hunters carried either 40-90 or 45-120 Sharps, than which there are in the world no rifles more accurate or powerful; with the larger-calibred ones (45 or 50) a man could easily kill an elephant. These weapons are excellent for very long range work, being good for half a mile and over; and sometimes the hunters were able to kill very many buffalo at a time, owing to their curious liability to fits of stupid, panic terror. Sometimes when these panics seize them they stampede and run off in headlong, heedless flight, going over any thing in their way. Once, in mid-winter, one of my men

was lying out in the open, under a heavy roll of furs, the wagon sheet over all. During the night a small herd of stampeded buffalo passed by, and one of them jumped on the bed, almost trampling on the sleeper, and then bounded off, as the latter rose with a yell. The others of the herd passed almost within arm's length on each side.

Occasionally these panic fits have the opposite effect and make them run together and stand still in a stupid, frightened manner. This is now and then the result when a hunter fires at a herd while keeping himself concealed; and on rare occasions (for buffalo act very differently at different times, according to their moods) it occurs even when he is in full sight. When they are made to act thus it is called in hunters' parlance getting a "stand" on them; and often thirty or forty have been killed in one such stand, the hunter hardly shifting his position the whole time. Often, with their long-range heavy rifles, the hunters would fire a number of shots into a herd half a

mile off, and on approaching would find that they had bagged several—for the Sharps rifle has a very long range, and the narrow, heavy conical bullets will penetrate almost any thing. Once while coming in over the plains with an ox wagon two of my cowboys surprised a band of buffaloes, which on being fired at ran clear round them and then made a stand in nearly their former position; and there they stood until the men had fired away most of their ammunition, but only half a dozen or so were killed, the Winchesters being too light for such a distance. Hunting on foot is much the most destructive way of pursuing buffaloes; but it lacks the excitement of chasing them with horses.

When in Texas my brother had several chances to hunt them on horseback, while making a trip as guest of a captain of United States cavalry. The country through which they hunted was rolling and well watered, the buffalo being scattered over it in bands of no great size. While

riding out to look for the game they were mounted on large horses; when a band was spied they would dismount and get on the smaller buffalo ponies which the orderlies had been leading behind them. Then they would carefully approach from the leeward side, if possible keeping behind some hill or divide. When this was no longer possible they trotted gently towards the game, which usually gathered together and stood for a moment looking at them. The instant the buffalo turned, the spurs were put in and the ponies raced forward for all there was in them, it being an important point to close as soon as possible, as buffalo, though not swift, are very enduring. Usually a half a mile took the hunters up to the game, when each singled out his animal, rode along-side on its left flank, so close as almost to be able to touch it with the hand, and fired the heavy revolver into the loins or small of the back, the bullet ranging forward. At the instant of firing, the trained pony swerved off to the left, al-

most at right angles to its former course, so as to avoid the lunging charge sometimes made by the wounded brute. If the animal kept on, the hunter, having made a half circle, again closed up and repeated the shot; very soon the buffalo came to a halt, then its head dropped, it straddled widely with its forelegs, swayed to and fro, and pitched heavily forward on its side. The secret of success in this sort of hunting is to go right up by the side of the buffalo; if a man stays off at a distance of fifteen or twenty feet he may fire a score of shots and not kill or cripple his game.

While hunting this, the largest of American animals, on horseback is doubtless the most exciting way in which its chase can be carried on, we must beware of crying down its pursuit on foot. To be sure, in the latter case, the actual stalking and shooting the buffalo does not need on the part of the hunter as much skill and as good marksmanship as is the case in hunting most other kinds of large game, and is but

a trifle more risky; yet, on the other hand, the fatigue of following the game is much greater, and the country is usually so wild as to call for some hardihood and ability to stand rough work on the part of the man who penetrates it.

One September I determined to take a short trip after bison. At that time I was staying in a cow-camp a good many miles up the river from my ranch; there were then no cattle south of me, where there are now very many thousand head, and the buffalo had been plentiful in the country for a couple of winters past, but the last of the herds had been destroyed or driven out six months before, and there were only a few stragglers left. It was one of my first hunting trips; previously I had shot with the rifle very little, and that only at deer or antelope. I took as a companion one of my best men, named Ferris (a brother of the Ferris already mentioned); we rode a couple of ponies, not very good ones, and each carried his roll of blankets and a very

small store of food in a pack behind the saddle.

Leaving the cow-camp early in the morning, we crossed the Little Missouri and for the first ten miles threaded our way through the narrow defiles and along the tortuous divides of a great tract of Bad Lands. Although it was fall and the nights were cool the sun was very hot in the middle of the day, and we jogged along at a slow pace, so as not to tire our ponies. Two or three black-tail deer were seen, some distance off, and when we were a couple of hours on our journey, we came across the fresh track of a bull buffalo. Buffalo wander a great distance, for, though they do not go fast, yet they may keep travelling, as they graze, all day long; and though this one had evidently passed but a few hours before, we were not sure we would see him. His tracks were easily followed as long as he had kept to the soft creek bottom, crossing and recrossing the narrow wet ditch which wound its way through it; but when he

left this and turned up a winding coulie that branched out in every direction, his hoofs scarcely made any marks in the hard ground. We rode up the ravine, carefully examining the soil for nearly half an hour, however; finally, as we passed the mouth of a little side coulie, there was a plunge and crackle through the bushes at its head, and a shabby-looking old bull bison galloped out of it and, without an instant's hesitation, plunged over a steep bank into a patch of rotten, broken ground which led around the base of a high butte. So quickly did he disappear that we had not time to dismount and fire. Spurring our horses we galloped up to the brink of the cliff down which he had plunged; it was remarkable that he should have gone down it unhurt. From where we stood we could see nothing; so, getting our horses over the broken ground as fast as possible, we ran to the butte and rode round it, only to see the buffalo come out of the broken land and climb up the side of another butte over a

quarter of a mile off. In spite of his great weight and cumbersome, heavy-looking gait, he climbed up the steep bluff with ease and even agility, and when he had reached the ridge stood and looked back at us for a moment; while so doing he held his head high up, and at that distance his great shaggy mane and huge fore-quarter made him look like a lion. In another second he again turned away and made off; and, being evidently very shy and accustomed to being harassed by hunters, must have travelled a long distance before stopping, for we followed his trail for some miles until it got on such hard, dry ground that his hoofs did not leave a scrape in the soil, and yet did not again catch so much as a glimpse of him.

Soon after leaving his trail we came out on the great, broken prairies that lie far back from the river. These are by no means everywhere level. A flat space of a mile or two will be bounded by a low cliff or a row of small round-topped buttes; or

will be interrupted by a long, gentle sloping ridge, the divide between two creeks; or by a narrow canyon, perhaps thirty feet deep and not a dozen wide, stretching for miles before there is a crossing place. The smaller creeks were dried up, and were merely sinuous hollows in the prairie; but one or two of the larger ones held water here and there, and cut down through the land in bold, semicircular sweeps, the outside of each curve being often bounded by a steep bluff with trees at its bottom, and occasionally holding a miry pool. At one of these pools we halted, about ten o'clock in the morning, and lunched; the banks were so steep and rotten that we had to bring water to the more clumsy of the two ponies in a hat.

Then we remounted and fared on our way, scanning the country far and near from every divide, but seeing no trace of game. The air was hot and still, and the brown, barren land stretched out on every side for leagues of dreary sameness. Once

we came to a canyon which ran across our path, and followed along its brink for a mile to find a place where we could get into it; when we finally found such a place, we had to back the horses down to the bottom and then lead them along it for some hundred yards before finding a break through which we could climb out.

It was late in the afternoon before we saw any game; then we made out in the middle of a large plain three black specks, which proved to be buffalo—old bulls. Our horses had come a good distance, under a hot sun, and as they had had no water except from the mud-hole in the morning they were in no condition for running. They were not very fast anyhow; so, though the ground was unfavorable, we made up our minds to try to creep up to the buffalo. We left the ponies in a hollow half a mile from the game, and started off on our hands and knees, taking advantage of every sage-brush as cover. After a while we had to lie flat on our bodies and wriggle like

snakes; and while doing this I blundered into a bed of cactus, and filled my hands with the spines. After taking advantage of every hollow, hillock, or sage-brush, we got within about a hundred and twenty-five or fifty yards of where the three bulls were unconsciously feeding, and as all between was bare ground I drew up and fired. It was the first time I ever shot at buffalo, and, confused by the bulk and shaggy hair of the beast, I aimed too far back at one that was standing nearly broadside on towards me. The bullet told on his body with a loud crack, the dust flying up from his hide; but it did not work him any immediate harm, or in the least hinder him from making off; and away went all three, with their tails up, disappearing over a slight rise in the ground.

Much disgusted, we trotted back to where the horses were picketed, jumped on them, a good deal out of breath, and rode after the flying game. We thought that the wounded one might turn out and leave the others;

and so followed them, though they had over a mile's start. For seven or eight miles we loped our jaded horses along at a brisk pace, occasionally seeing the buffalo far ahead; and finally, when the sun had just set, we saw that all three had come to a stand in a gentle hollow. There was no cover anywhere near them; and, as a last desperate resort, we concluded to try to run them on our worn-out ponies.

As we cantered toward them they faced us for a second and then turned round and made off, while with spurs and quirts we made the ponies put on a burst that enabled us to close in with the wounded one just about the time that the lessening twilight had almost vanished; while the rim of the full moon rose above the horizon. The pony I was on could barely hold its own, after getting up within sixty or seventy yards of the wounded bull; my companion, better mounted, forged ahead, a little to one side. The bull saw him coming and swerved from his course, and by cutting across I

was able to get nearly up to him. The ground over which we were running was fearful, being broken into holes and ditches, separated by hillocks; in the dull light, and at the speed we were going, no attempt could be made to guide the horses, and the latter, fagged out by their exertions, floundered and pitched forward at every stride, hardly keeping their legs. When up within twenty feet I fired my rifle, but the darkness, and especially the violent, labored motion of my pony, made me miss; I tried to get in closer, when suddenly up went the bull's tail, and wheeling, he charged me with lowered horns. My pony, frightened into momentary activity, spun round and tossed up his head; I was holding the rifle in both hands, and the pony's head, striking it, knocked it violently against my forehead, cutting quite a gash, from which, heated as I was, the blood poured into my eyes. Meanwhile the buffalo, passing me, charged my companion, and followed him as he made off, and, as the ground was very bad, for

some little distance his lowered head was unpleasantly near the tired pony's tail. I tried to run in on him again, but my pony stopped short, dead beat; and by no spurring could I force him out of a slow trot. My companion jumped off and took a couple of shots at the buffalo, which missed in the dim moonlight; and to our unutterable chagrin the wounded bull labored off and vanished in the darkness. I made after him on foot, in hopeless and helpless wrath, until he got out of sight.

Our horses were completely done out; we did not mount them again, but led them slowly along, trembling, foaming, and sweating. The ground was moist in places, and after an hour's search we found in a reedy hollow a little mud-pool, with water so slimy that it was almost gelatinous. Thirsty though we were, for we had not drunk for twelve hours, neither man nor horse could swallow more than a mouthful or two of this water. We unsaddled the horses, and made our beds by the hollow,

each eating a biscuit; there was not a twig with which to make a fire, nor any thing to which we might fasten the horses. Spreading the saddle-blankets under us, and our own over us, we lay down, with the saddles as pillows, to which we had been obliged to lariat our steeds.

The ponies stood about almost too tired to eat; but in spite of their fatigue they were very watchful and restless, continually snorting or standing with their ears forward, peering out into the night; wild beasts, or some such things, were about. The day before we had had a false alarm from supposed hostile Indians, who turned out to be merely half-breed Crees; and, as we were in a perfectly lonely part of the wilderness, we knew we were in the domain of both white and red horse-thieves, and that the latter might in addition to our horses try to take our scalps. It was some time before we dozed off, waking up with a start whenever we heard the horses stop grazing and stand motionless with heads

raised, looking out into the darkness. But at last, tired out, we fell sound asleep.

About midnight we were rudely awakened by having our pillows whipped out from under our heads; and as we started from the bed we saw, in the bright moonlight, the horses galloping madly off with the saddles, tied to the lariats whose other ends were round their necks, bounding and trailing after them. Our first thought was that they had been stampeded by horse-thieves, and we rolled over and crouched down in the grass with our rifles; but nothing could be seen, except a shadowy four-footed form in the hollow, and in the end we found that the horses must have taken alarm at a wolf or wolves that had come up to the edge of the bank and looked over at us, not being able at first to make out what we were.

We did not expect to find the horses again that night, but nevertheless took up the broad trail made by the saddles as they dragged through the dewy grass, and fol-

lowed it well in the moonlight. Our task proved easier than we had feared; for they had not run much over half a mile, and we found them standing close together and looking intently round when we came up. Leading them back we again went to sleep; but the weather was rapidly changing, and by three o'clock a fine rain began to come steadily down, and we cowered and shivered under our wet blankets till morning. At the first streak of dawn, having again eaten a couple of biscuits, we were off, glad to bid good-bye to the inhospitable pool, in whose neighborhood we had spent such a comfortless night. A fine, drizzling mist shrouded us and hid from sight all distant objects; and at times there were heavy downpours of rain. Before we had gone any distance we became what is termed by backwoodsmen or plainsmen, "turned round," and the creeks suddenly seemed to be running the wrong way; after which we travelled purely by the compass.

For some hours we kept a nearly straight

course over the formless, shapeless plain, drenched through, and thoroughly uncomfortable; then as we rose over a low divide the fog lifted for a few minutes, and we saw several black objects slowly crossing some rolling country ahead of us, and a glance satisfied us they were buffalo. The horses were picketed at once, and we ran up as near the game as we dared, and then began to stalk them, creeping forward on our hands and knees through the soft, muddy prairie soil, while a smart shower of rain blew in our faces, as we advanced up wind. The country was favorable, and we got within less than a hundred yards of the nearest, a large cow, though we had to creep along so slowly that we were chilled through, and our teeth chattered behind our blue lips. To crown my misfortunes, I now made one of those misses which a man to his dying day always looks back upon with wonder and regret. The rain was beating in my eyes, and the drops stood out in the sight of the rifle so that I could

hardly draw a bead; and I either overshot or else at the last moment must have given a nervous jerk and pulled the rifle clear off the mark. At any rate I missed clean, and the whole band plunged down into a hollow and were off before, with my stiffened and numbed fingers, I could get another shot; and in wet, sullen misery we plodded back to the ponies.

All that day the rain continued, and we passed another wretched night. Next morning, however, it had cleared off, and as the sun rose brightly we forgot our hunger and sleepiness, and rode cheerily off up a large dry creek, in whose bottom pools of rain-water still stood. During the morning, however, our ill-luck continued. My companion's horse almost trod on a rattlesnake, and narrowly escaped being bitten. While riding along the face of a steeply-inclined bluff the sandy soil broke away under the ponies' hoofs, and we slid and rolled down to the bottom, where we came to in a heap, horses and men. Then while galloping

through a brush-covered bottom my pony put both forefeet in a hole made by the falling and uprooting of a tree, and turned a complete somersault, pitching me a good ten feet beyond his head. And finally, while crossing what looked like the hard bed of a dry creek, the earth gave way under my horse as if he had stepped on a trap-door and let him down to his withers in soft, sticky mud. I was off at once and floundered to the bank, loosening the lariat from the saddlebow; and both of us turning to with a will, and bringing the other pony in to our aid, hauled him out by the rope, pretty nearly strangling him in so doing; and he looked rather a melancholy object as he stood up, trembling and shaking, and plastered with mire from head to tail.

So far the trip had certainly not been a success, although sufficiently varied as regards its incidents; we had been confined to moist biscuits for three days as our food; had been wet and cold at night, and sunburned till our faces peeled in the day; were

hungry and tired, and had met with bad weather, and all kinds of accidents; in addition to which I had shot badly. But a man who is fond of sport, and yet is not naturally a good hunter, soon learns that if he wishes any success at all he must both keep in memory and put in practice Anthony Trollope's famous precept: "It's dogged as does it." And if he keeps doggedly on in his course the odds are heavy that in the end the longest lane will prove to have a turning. Such was the case on this occasion.

Shortly after mid-day we left the creek bottom, and skirted a ridge of broken buttes, cut up by gullies and winding ravines, in whose bottoms grew bunch grass. While passing near the mouth, and to leeward of one of these ravines, both ponies threw up their heads, and snuffed the air, turning their muzzles towards the head of the gully. Feeling sure that they had smelt some wild beast, either a bear or a buffalo, I slipped off my pony, and ran quickly but cautiously

up along the valley. Before I had gone a hundred yards, I noticed in the soft soil at the bottom the round prints of a bison's hoofs; and immediately afterwards got a glimpse of the animal himself, as he fed slowly up the course of the ravine, some distance ahead of me. The wind was just right, and no ground could have been better for stalking. Hardly needing to bend down, I walked up behind a small sharp-crested hillock, and peeping over, there below me, not fifty yards off, was a great bison bull. He was walking along, grazing as he walked. His glossy fall coat was in fine trim, and shone in the rays of the sun; while his pride of bearing showed him to be in the lusty vigor of his prime. As I rose above the crest of the hill, he held up his head and cocked his tail in the air. Before he could go off, I put the bullet in behind his shoulder. The wound was an almost immediately fatal one, yet with surprising agility for so large and heavy an animal, he bounded up the opposite side of

the ravine, heedless of two more balls, both of which went into his flank and ranged forwards, and disappeared over the ridge at a lumbering gallop, the blood pouring from his mouth and nostrils. We knew he could not go far, and trotted leisurely along on his bloody trail; and in the next gully we found him stark dead, lying almost on his back, having pitched over the side when he tried to go down it. His head was a remarkably fine one, even for a fall buffalo. He was lying in a very bad position, and it was most tedious and tiresome work to cut it off and pack it out. The flesh of a cow or calf is better eating than is that of a bull; but the so-called hump meat—that is, the strip of steak on each side of the backbone—is excellent, and tender and juicy. Buffalo meat is with difficulty to be distinguished from ordinary beef. At any rate, the flesh of this bull tasted uncommonly good to us, for we had been without fresh meat for a week; and until a healthy, active man has been without it for some

little time, he does not know how positively and almost painfully hungry for flesh he becomes, no matter how much farinaceous food he may have. And the very toil I had been obliged to go through, in order to procure the head, made me feel all the prouder of it when it was at last in my possession.

A year later I made another trip, this time with a wagon, through what had once been a famous buffalo range, the divide between the Little Missouri and the Powder, at its northern end, where some of the creeks flowing into the Yellowstone also head up; but though in most places throughout the range the grass had not yet grown from the time a few months before when it had been cropped off down close to the roots by the grazing herds, and though the ground was cut up in all directions by buffalo trails, and covered by their innumerable skulls and skeletons, not a living one did we see, and only one moderately fresh track, which we followed until we lost it. Some of the

sharper ridges were of soft, crumbling sandstone, and when a buffalo trail crossed such a one, it generally made a curious, heart-shaped cut, the feet of the animals sinking the narrow path continually deeper and deeper, while their bodies brushed out the sides. The profile of a ridge across which several trails led had rather a curious look when seen against the sky.

Game was scarce on this broken plains country, where the water supply was very scanty, and where the dull brown grass that grew on the parched, sun-cracked ground had been already cropped close; still we found enough to keep us in fresh meat; and though no buffalo were seen, the trip was a pleasant one. There was a certain charm in the very vastness and the lonely, melancholy desolation of the land over which every day we galloped far and wide from dawn till nightfall; while the heavy canvas-covered wagon lumbered slowly along to the appointed halting-place. On such a trip one soon gets to feel that the wagon is

home; and after a tiresome day it is pleasant just to lie still in the twilight by the side of the smouldering fire and watch the men as they busy themselves cooking or arranging the beds, while the solemn old ponies graze around or stand quietly by the great white-topped prairie schooner.

The blankets and rubbers being arranged in a carefully chosen spot to leeward of the wagon, we were not often bothered at night, even by quite heavy rainfalls; but once or twice, when in peculiarly exposed places, we were struck by such furious gusts of wind and rain that we were forced to gather up our bedding and hastily scramble into the wagon, where we would at least be dry, even though in pretty cramped quarters.

CHAPTER IV

STILL-HUNTING ELK ON THE MOUNTAIN

AFTER the buffalo the elk are the first animals to disappear from a country when it is settled. This arises from their size and consequent conspicuousness, and the eagerness with which they are followed by hunters; and also because of their gregariousness and their occasional fits of stupid panic during whose continuance hunters can now and then work great slaughter in a herd. Five years ago elk were abundant in the valley of the Little Missouri, and in fall were found wandering in great bands of over a hundred individuals each. But they have now vanished completely, except that one or two may still lurk in some of the most remote and broken

places, where there are deep, wooded ravines.

Formerly the elk were plentiful all over the plains, coming down into them in great bands during the fall months and traversing their entire extent. But the incoming of hunters and cattle-men has driven them off the ground as completely as the buffalo; unlike the latter, however, they are still very common in the dense woods that cover the Rocky Mountains and the other great western chains. In the old days running elk on horseback was a highly esteemed form of plains sport; but now that it has become a beast of the timber and the craggy ground, instead of a beast of the open, level prairie, it is followed almost solely on foot and with the rifle. Its sense of smell is very acute, and it has good eyes and quick ears; and its wariness makes it under ordinary circumstances very difficult to approach. But it is subject to fits of panic folly, and during their continuance great numbers can be destroyed. A band

places almost as much reliance upon the leaders as does a flock of sheep; and if the leaders are shot down, the others will huddle together in a terrified mass, seemingly unable to make up their minds in which direction to flee. When one, more bold than the rest, does at last step out, the hidden hunter's at once shooting it down will produce a fresh panic; I have known of twenty elk (or wapiti, as they are occasionally called) being thus procured out of one band. And at times they show a curious indifference to danger, running up on a hunter who is in plain sight, or standing still for a few fatal seconds to gaze at one that unexpectedly appears.

In spite of its size and strength and great branching antlers, the elk is but little more dangerous to the hunter than is an ordinary buck. Once, in coming up to a wounded one, I had it strike at me with its forefeet, bristling up the hair on the neck, and making a harsh, grating noise with its teeth; as its back was broken it could not get at

me, but the savage glare in its eyes left me no doubt as to its intentions. Only in a single instance have I ever known of a hunter being regularly charged by one of these great deer. He had struck a band of elk and wounded an old bull, which, after going a couple of miles, received another ball and then separated from the rest of the herd and took refuge in a dense patch of small timber. The hunter went in on its trail and came upon it lying down; it jumped to its feet and, with hair all bristling, made a regular charge upon its pursuer, who leaped out of the way behind a tree just in time to avoid it. It crashed past through the undergrowth without turning, and he killed it with a third and last shot. But this was a very exceptional case, and in most instances the elk submits to death with hardly an effort at resistance; it is by no means as dangerous an antagonist as is a bull moose.

The elk is unfortunately one of those animals seemingly doomed to total destruc-

tion at no distant date. Already its range has shrunk to far less than one half its former size. Originally it was found as far as the Atlantic sea-board; I have myself known of several sets of antlers preserved in the house of a Long Island gentleman, whose ancestors had killed the bearers shortly after the first settlement of New York. Even so late as the first years of this century elk were found in many mountainous and densely wooded places east of the Mississippi; in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and all of what were then the Northwestern States and Territories. The last individual of the race was killed in the Adirondacks in 1834; in Pennsylvania not till nearly thirty years later; while a very few are still to be found in Northrn Michigan. Elsewhere they must now be sought far to the west of the Mississippi; and even there they are almost gone from the great plains, and are only numerous in the deep mountain forests. Wherever it exists the skin hunters and

meat butchers wage the most relentless and unceasing war upon it for the sake of its hide and flesh, and their unremitting persecution is thinning out the herds with terrible rapidity.

The gradual extermination of this, the most stately and beautiful animal of the chase to be found in America, can be looked upon only with unmixed regret by every sportsman and lover of nature. Excepting the moose, it is the largest and, without exception, it is the noblest of the deer tribe. No other species of true deer, in either the Old or the New World, come up to it in size and in the shape, length, and weight of its mighty antlers; while the grand, proud carriage and lordly bearing of an old bull make it perhaps the most majestic-looking of all the animal creation. The open plains have already lost one of their great attractions, now that we no more see the long lines of elk trotting across them; and it will be a sad day when the lordly, antlered beasts are no longer found in the

wild rocky glens and among the lonely woods of towering pines that cover the great western mountain chains.

The elk has other foes besides man. The grizzly will always make a meal of one if he gets a chance; and against his ponderous weight and savage prowess hoofs and antlers avail but little. Still he is too clumsy and easily avoided ever to do very much damage in the herds. Cougars, where they exist, work more havoc. A bull elk in rutting season, if on his guard, would with ease beat off a cougar; but the sly, cunning cat takes its quarry unawares, and once the cruel fangs are fastened in the game's throat or neck, no plunging or struggling can shake it off. The gray timber wolves also join in twos and threes to hunt down and hamstring the elk, if other game is scarce. But these great deer can hold their own and make head against all their brute foes; it is only when pitted against Man the Destroyer, that they succumb in the struggle for life.

I have never shot any elk in the immediate neighborhood of where my cattle range; but I have had very good sport with them in a still wilder and more western region; and this I will now describe.

During last summer we found it necessary to leave my ranch on the Little Missouri and take quite a long trip through the cattle country of Southeastern Montana and Northern Wyoming; and, having come to the foot of the Bighorn Mountains, we took a fortnight's hunt through them after elk and bear.

We went into the mountains with a pack train, leaving the ranch wagon at the place where we began to go up the first steep rise, There were two others, besides myself, in the party; one of them, the teamster, a weather-beaten old plainsman, who possessed a most extraordinary stock of miscellaneous misinformation upon every conceivable subject, and the other my ranch foreman, Merrifield. None of us had ever been within two hundred miles of the Big-

horn range before; so that our hunting trip had the added zest of being also an exploring expedition.

Each of us rode one pony, and the packs were carried on four others. We were not burdened by much baggage. Having no tent we took the canvas wagon sheet instead; our bedding, plenty of spare cartridges, some flour, bacon, coffee, sugar and salt, and a few very primitive cooking utensils, completed the outfit.

The Bighorn range is a chain of bare, rocky peaks stretching lengthwise along the middle of a table-land which is about thirty miles wide. At its edges this table-land falls sheer off into the rolling plains country. From the rocky peaks flow rapid brooks of clear, icy water, which take their way through deep gorges that they have channelled out in the surface of the plateau; a few miles from the heads of the streams these gorges become regular canyons, with sides so steep as to be almost perpendicular; in travelling, therefore, the trail has to keep

well up toward timber line, as lower down horses find it difficult or impossible to get across the valleys. In strong contrast to the treeless cattle plains extending to its foot, the sides of the table-land are densely wooded with tall pines. Its top forms what is called a park country; that is, it is covered with alternating groves of trees and open glades, each grove or glade varying in size from half a dozen to many hundred acres.

We went in with the pack train two days' journey before pitching camp in what we intended to be our hunting grounds, following an old Indian trail. No one who has not tried it can understand the work and worry that it is to drive a pack train over rough ground and through timber. We were none of us very skilful at packing, and the loads were all the time slipping; sometimes the ponies would stampede with the pack half tied, or they would get caught among the fallen logs, or in a ticklish place would suddenly decline to follow

the trail, or would commit some one of the thousand other tricks which seem to be all a pack-pony knows. Then at night they were a bother; if picketed out they fed badly and got thin, and if they were not picketed they sometimes strayed away. The most valuable one of the lot was also the hardest to catch. Accordingly we used to let him loose with a long lariat tied round his neck, and one night this lariat twisted up in a sage-brush, and in struggling to free himself the pony got a half hitch round his hind leg, threw himself, and fell over a bank into a creek on a large stone. We found him in the morning very much the worse for wear and his hind legs swelled up so that his chief method of progression was by a series of awkward hops. Of course no load could be put upon him, but he managed to limp along behind the other horses, and actually in the end reached the ranch on the Little Missouri three hundred miles off. No sooner had he got there and been turned loose to rest than he fell down a big wash-

out and broke his neck. Another time one of the mares—a homely beast with a head like a camel's—managed to flounder into the very centre of a mud-hole, and we spent the better part of a morning in fishing her out.

It was on the second day of our journey into the mountains, while leading the pack-ponies down the precipitous side of a steep valley, that I obtained my first sight of elk. The trail wound through a forest of tall, slender pines, standing very close together, and with dead trees lying in every direction. The narrow trunks or overhanging limbs threatened to scrape off the packs at every moment, as the ponies hopped and scrambled over the fallen trunks; and it was difficult work, and most trying to the temper, to keep them going along straight and prevent them from wandering off to one side or the other. At last we got out into a succession of small, open glades, with boggy spots in them; the lowest glade was of some size, and as we reached it we saw

a small band of cow elk disappearing into the woods on its other edge. I was riding a restive horse, and when I tried to jump off to shoot, it reared and turned round, before I could get my left foot out of the stirrup; when I at last got free I could get a glimpse of but one elk, vanishing behind a dead trunk, and my hasty shot missed. I was a good deal annoyed at this, my opening experience with mountain game, feeling that it was an omen of misfortune; but it did not prove so, for during the rest of my two weeks' stay, I with one exception got every animal I fired at.

A beautiful, clear mountain brook ran through the bottom of the valley, and in an open space by its side we pitched camp. We were entirely out of fresh meat, and after lunch all three of us separated to hunt, each for his own hand. The teamster went up stream, Merrifield went down, while I followed the tracks of the band of cows and calves that we had started in the morning; their trail led along the wooded hill-crests

parallel to the stream, and therefore to Merrifield's course. The crests of the hills formed a wavy-topped but continuous ridge between two canyon-like valleys, and the sides fell off steeper and steeper the farther down stream I went, until at last they were broken in places by sheer precipices and cliffs; the groves of trees too, though with here and there open glades, formed a continuous forest of tall pines. There was a small growth of young spruce and other evergreen, thick enough to give cover, but not to interfere with seeing and shooting to some distance. The pine trunks rose like straight columns, standing quite close together; and at their bases the ground was carpeted with the sweet-scented needles, over which, in my moccasined feet, I trod without any noise. It was but a little past noon, and the sun in the open was very hot; yet underneath the great archways of the pine woods the air though still was cool, and the sunbeams that struggled down here and there through the interlacing branches,

and glinted on the rough trunks, only made bright spots in what was elsewhere the uniform, grayish half-light of the mountain forest. Game trails threaded the woods in all directions, made for the most part by the elk. These animals, when not disturbed, travel strung out in single file, each one stepping very nearly in the tracks of the one before it; they are great wanderers, going over an immense amount of country during the course of a day, and so they soon wear regular, well-beaten paths in any place where they are at all plentiful.

The band I was following had, as is their custom, all run together into a wedge-shaped mass when I fired, and crashed off through the woods in a bunch during the first moments of alarm. The footprints in the soil showed that they had in the beginning taken a plunging gallop, but after a few strides had settled into the swinging, ground-covering trot that is the elk's most natural and characteristic gait. A band of elk when alarmed is likely to go twenty

miles without halting; but these had probably been very little molested, and there was a chance that they would not go far without stopping. After getting through the first grove, the huddled herd had straightened itself out into single file, and trotted off in a nearly straight line. A mile or two of ground having been passed over in this way, the animals had slackened their pace into a walk, evidently making up their minds that they were out of danger. Soon afterwards they had begun to go slower, and to scatter out on each side, browsing or grazing.

It was not difficult work to follow up the band at first. While trotting, their sharp hoofs came down with sufficient force to leave very distinct footprints, and, moreover, the trail was the more readily made out as all the animals trod nearly in each other's steps. But when the band spread out the tracking was much harder, as each single one, walking slowly along, merely made here and there a slight scrape in the

soil or a faint indentation in the bed of pine needles. Besides, I had to advance with the greatest caution, keeping the sharpest look-out in front and on all sides of me. Even as it was, though I got very close up to my game, they were on foot before I saw them, and I did not get a standing shot. While carefully looking to my footsteps I paid too little heed to the rifle which I held in my right hand, and let the barrel tap smartly on a tree trunk. Instantly there was a stamp and movement among the bushes ahead and to one side of me; the elk had heard but had neither seen nor smelt me; and a second afterward I saw the indistinct, shadowy outlines of the band as they trotted down hill, from where their beds had been made on the very summit of the crest, taking a course diagonal to mine. I raced forward and also down hill, behind some large mossy boulders, and cut them fairly off, the band passing directly ahead of me and not twenty yards away, at a slashing trot, which a few of them

changed for a wild gallop, as I opened fire. I was so hemmed in by the thick tree trunks, and it was so difficult to catch more than a fleeting glimpse of each animal, that though I had fired four shots I only brought down one elk, a full-grown cow, with a broken neck, dead in its tracks; but I also broke the hind leg of a bull calf. Elk offer easy marks when in motion, much easier than deer, because of their trotting gait, and their regular, deliberate movements. They look very handsome as they trot through a wood, stepping lightly and easily over the dead trunks and crashing through the underbrush, with the head held up and nose pointing forward. In galloping, however, the neck is thrust straight out in front, and the animal moves with labored bounds, which carry it along rapidly but soon tire it out.

After thrusting the hunting-knife into the throat of the cow, I followed the trail of the band; and in an open glade, filled with tall sage-brush, came across and finished

the wounded calf. Meanwhile the others ran directly across Merrifield's path, and he shot two. This gave us much more meat than we wished; nor would we have shot as many, but neither of us could reckon upon the other's getting as much game, and flesh was a necessity. Leaving Merrifield to skin and cut up the dead animals, I walked back to camp where I found the teamster, who had brought in the hams and tongues of two deer he had shot, and sent him back with a pack-pony for the hides and meat of the elk. Elk tongues are most delicious eating, being juicy, tender, and well flavored; they are excellent to take out as a lunch on a long hunting trip.

We now had more than enough meat in camp, and did not shoot at another cow or calf elk while on the mountains, though we saw quite a number; the last day of my stay I was within fifty yards of two that were walking quietly through a very dense, swampy wood. But it took me some time longer before I got any fine heads.

The day after killing the cow and calf I went out in the morning by myself and hunted through the woods up toward the rocky peaks, going above timber line, and not reaching camp until after nightfall. In hunting through a wild and unknown country a man must always take great care not to get lost. In the first place he should never, under any conceivable circumstances, stir fifty yards from camp without a compass, plenty of matches, and his rifle; then he need never feel nervous, even if he is lost, for he can keep himself from cold and hunger, and can steer a straight course until he reaches some settlement. But he should not get lost at all. Old plainsmen or backwoodsmen get to have almost an instinct for finding their way, and are able to tell where they are and the way home in almost any place; probably they keep in their heads an accurate idea of their course and of the general lay of the land. But most men cannot do this. In hunting through a new country a man should, if

possible, choose some prominent landmarks, and then should learn how they look from different sides—for they will with difficulty be recognized as the same objects, if seen from different points of view. If he gets out of sight of these, he should choose another to work back to, as a kind of half-way point; and so on. He should keep looking back; it is wonderful how different a country looks when following back on one's trail. If possible, he should locate his camp, in his mind, with reference to a line, and not a point; he should take a river or a long ridge, for example. Then at any time he can strike back to this line and follow it up or down till he gets home.

If possible, I always spend the first day, when on new ground, in hunting up-stream. Then, so long as I am sure I do not wander off into the valleys or creeks of another water-course, I am safe, for, no matter on what remote branch, all I have to do is to follow down-stream until I reach camp; while if I was below camp, it would

be difficult to tell which fork to follow up every time the stream branched. A man should always notice the position of the sun, the direction from which the wind blows, the slope of the water-courses, prominent features in the landscape, and so forth, and should keep in mind his own general course; and he had better err on the side of caution rather than on that of boldness. Getting lost is very uncomfortable, both for the man himself and for those who have to break up their work and hunt for him. Deep woods or perfectly flat, open country are almost equally easy places in which to get lost; while if the country is moderately open and level, with only here and there a prominent and easily recognized hill or butte, a man can safely go where he wishes, hardly paying any heed to his course. But even here he should know his general direction from camp, so as to be able to steer for it with a compass if a fog comes up. And if he leaves his horse hidden in a gully or pocket while he goes off to hunt on foot, he must recollect to keep

the place well in his mind; on one occasion when I feared that somebody might meddle with my horse, I hid him so successfully that I spent the better part of a day in finding him.

Keeping in mind the above given rules, when I left camp the morning after the breaking up of the band of cows and calves, I hunted up-stream, and across and through the wooded spurs dividing the little brooks that formed its head waters. No game was encountered, except some blue grouse, which I saw when near camp on my return, and shot for the pot. These blue grouse are the largest species found in America, except the sage fowl. They are exclusively birds of the deep mountain forests, and in their manners remind one of the spruce grouse of the Northeastern woods, being almost equally tame. When alarmed, they fly at once into a tree, and several can often be shot before the remainder take fright and are off. On this trip we killed a good many, shooting off their heads with our rifles. They formed

a most welcome addition to our bill of fare, the meat being white and excellent. A curious peculiarity in their flesh is that the breast meat has in it a layer of much darker color. They are very handsome birds, and furnish dainty food to men wearied of venison; but, unless their heads are knocked off with a rifle, they do not furnish much sport, as they will not fly off when flushed, but simply rise into a fairly tall tree, and there sit, motionless, except that the head is twisted and bobbed round to observe the acts of the foe.

All of the sights and sounds in these pine woods that clothed the Bighorn Mountains reminded me of the similar ones seen and heard in the great, sombre forests of Maine and the Adirondacks. The animals and birds were much the same. As in the East, there were red squirrels, chipmunks, red hares, and woodchucks, all of them differing but slightly from our common kinds; woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, and whiskey jacks came about camp; ravens and eagles flew over the rocky cliffs. There were some new

forms, however. The nutcracker, a large, noisy, crow-like bird, with many of the habits of a woodpecker, was common, and in the rocks above timber line, we came upon the Little Chief hare, a wee animal, with a shrill, timorous squeak.

During our stay upon the mountains the weather was generally clear, but always cold, thin ice covering the dark waters of the small mountain tarns, and there were slight snow-falls every two or three days; but we were only kept in camp one day, when it sleeted, snowed, and rained from dawn till nightfall. We passed this day very comfortably, however. I had far too much forethought to go into the woods without a small supply of books for just such occasions. We had rigged the canvas wagon sheet into a tent, at the bottom of the ravine, near the willow-covered brink of the brook that ran through it. The steep hill-sides bounding the valley, which a little below us became sheer cliffs, were partly covered with great pines and spruces, and partly open ground

grown up with tall grass and sage-brush. We were thus well sheltered from the wind; and when one morning we looked out and saw the wet snow lying on the ground, and with its weight bending down the willow bushes and loading the tall evergreens, while the freezing sleet rattled against the canvas, we simply started a roaring fire of pine logs in front of the tent, and passed a cosy day inside, cleaning guns, reading, and playing cards. Blue grouse, elk hams, and deer saddles hung from the trees around, so we had no fear of starvation. Still, towards evening we got a little tired, and I could not resist taking a couple of hours' brisk ride in the mist, through a chain of open glades that sloped off from our camp.

Later on we made a camp at the head of a great natural meadow, whre two streams joined together, and in times long gone by had been dammed by the beaver. This had at first choked up the passage and made a small lake; then dams were built higher and higher up, making chains of little ponds.

By degrees these filled up, and the whole valley became a broad marshy meadow, through which the brook wound between rows of willows and alders. These beaver meadows are very common; but are not usually of such large size. Around this camp there was very little game; but we got a fine mess of spotted trout by taking a long and most toilsome walk up to a little lake lying very near timber line. Our rods and lines were most primitive, consisting of two clumsy dead cedars (the only trees within reach), about six feet of string tied to one and a piece of catgut to the other, with preposterous hooks; yet the trout were so ravenous that we caught them at the rate of about one a minute; and they formed another welcome change in our camp fare. This lake lay in a valley whose sides were so steep and boulder-covered as to need hard climbing to get into and out of it. Every day in the cold, clear weather we tramped miles and miles through the woods and mountains, which, after a snow-storm took on a really

wintry look; while in the moonlight the snow-laden forests shone and sparkled like crystal. The dweller in cities has but a faint idea of the way we ate and slept.

One day Merrifield and I went out together and had a rather exciting chase after some bull elk. The previous evening, toward sunset, I had seen three bulls trotting off across an open glade toward a great stretch of forest and broken ground, up near the foot of the rocky peaks. Next morning early we started off to hunt through this country. The walking was hard work, especially up and down the steep cliffs, covered with slippery pine needles; or among the windfalls, where the rows of dead trees lay piled up across one another in the wildest confusion. We saw nothing until we came to a large patch of burnt ground, where we at once found the soft, black soil marked up by elk hoofs; nor had we penetrated into it more than a few hundred yards before we came to tracks made but a few minutes before, and almost instantly afterward saw three bull

elk, probably those I had seen on the preceding day. We had been running briskly up-hill through the soft, heavy loam, in which our feet made no noise but slipped and sank deeply; as a consequence, I was all out of breath and my hand so unsteady that I missed my first shot. Elk, however, do not vanish with the instantaneous rapidity of frightened deer, and these three trotted off in a direction quartering to us. I doubt if I ever went through more violent exertion than in the next ten minutes. We raced after them at full speed, opening fire; I wounded all three, but none of the wounds were immediately disabling. They trotted on and we panted afterwards, slipping on the wet earth, pitching headlong over charred stumps, leaping on dead logs that broke beneath our weight, more than once measuring our full-length on the ground, halting and firing whenever we got a chance. At last one bull fell; we passed him by after the others which were still running up-hill. The sweat streamed into my eyes and made

furrows in the sooty mud that covered my face, from having fallen full length down on the burnt earth; I sobbed for breath as I toiled at a shambling trot after them, as nearly done out as could well be. At this moment they turned down-hill. 'It was a great relief; a man who is too done up to go a steep up-hill can still run fast enough down; with a last spurt I closed in near enough to fire again; one elk fell; the other went off at a walk. We passed the second elk and I kept on alone after the third, not able to go at more than a slow trot myself, and too much winded to dare risk a shot at any distance. He got out of the burnt patch, going into some thick timber in a deep ravine; I closed pretty well, and rushed after him into a thicket of young evergreens. Hardly was I in when there was a scramble and bounce among them and I caught a glimpse of a yellow body moving out to one side; I ran out toward the edge and fired through the twigs at the moving beast. Down it went, but when I ran up, to my dis-

gust I found that I had jumped and killed, in my haste, a black-tail deer, which must have been already roused by the passage of the wounded elk. I at once took up the trail of the latter again, but after a little while the blood grew less, and ceased, and I lost the track; nor could I find it, hunt as hard as I might. The poor beast could not have gone five hundred yards; yet we never found the carcass.

Then I walked slowly back past the deer I had slain by so curious a mischance, to the elk. The first one shot down was already dead. The second was only wounded, though it could not rise. When it saw us coming it sought to hide from us by laying its neck flat on the ground, but when we came up close it raised its head and looked proudly at us, the heavy mane bristling up on the neck, while its eyes glared and its teeth grated together. I felt really sorry to kill it. Though these were both well-known elks, their antlers, of ten points, were small, twisted, and ill-shaped; in fact hardly worth

preserving, except to call to mind a chase in which during a few minutes I did as much downright hard work as it has often fallen to my lot to do. The burnt earth had blackened our faces and hands till we looked like negroes.

The bull elk had at this time begun calling, and several times they were heard right round camp at night, challenging one another or calling to the cows. Their calling is known to hunters as "whistling"; but this is a most inappropriate name for it. It is a most singular and beautiful sound, and is very much the most musical cry uttered by any four-footed beast. When heard for the first time it is almost impossible to believe that it is the call of an animal; it sounds far more as if made by an Æolian harp or some strange wind instrument. It consists of quite a series of notes uttered continuously, in a most soft, musical, vibrant tone, so clearly that they can be heard half a mile off. Heard in the clear, frosty moonlight from the depths of the rugged and for-

est-clad mountains the effect is most beautiful; for its charm is heightened by the wild and desolate surroundings. It has the sustained, varied melody of some bird songs, with, of course, a hundred-fold greater power. Now and then, however, the performance is marred by the elk's apparently getting out of breath towards the close, and winding up with two or three gasping notes which have an unpleasantly mule-like sound.

The great pine-clad mountains, their forests studded with open glades, were the best of places for the still-hunter's craft. Going noiselessly through them in our dull-colored buckskin and noiseless moccasins, we kept getting glimpses, as it were, of the inner life of the mountains. Each animal that we saw had its own individuality. Aside from the thrill and tingle that a hunter experiences at the sight of his game, I by degrees grew to feel as if I had a personal interest in the different traits and habits of the wild creatures. The characters of the animals differed widely, and the differences were typified by

their actions; and it was pleasant to watch them in their own homes, myself unseen, when after stealthy, silent progress through the sombre and soundless depths of the woods I came upon them going about the ordinary business of their lives. The lumbering, self-confident gait of the bears, their burly strength, and their half-humorous, half-ferocious look, gave me a real insight into their character; and I never was more impressed by the exhibition of vast, physical power, than when watching from an ambush a grizzly burying or covering up an elk carcass. His motions looked awkward, but it was marvellous to see the ease and absence of effort with which he would scoop out great holes in the earth, or twitch the heavy carcass from side to side. And the proud, graceful, half-timid, half-defiant bearing of the elk was in its own way quite as noteworthy; they seemed to glory in their own power and beauty, and yet to be ever on the watch for foes against whom they knew they might not dare to contend. The true still-

hunter should be a lover of nature as well as of sport, or he will miss half the pleasure of being in the woods.

The finest bull, with the best head that I got, was killed in the midst of very beautiful and grand surroundings. We had been hunting through a great pine wood which ran up to the edge of a broad canyon-like valley, bounded by sheer walls of rock. There were fresh tracks of elk about, and we had been advancing up wind with even more than our usual caution when, on stepping out into a patch of open ground, near the edge of the cliff, we came upon a great bull, beating and thrashing his antlers against a young tree, about eighty yards off. He stopped and faced us for a second, his mighty antlers thrown in the air, as he held his head aloft. Behind him towered the tall and sombre pines, while at his feet the jutting crags overhung the deep chasm below, that stretched off between high walls of barren and snow-streaked rocks, the evergreens clinging to their sides, while along the bot-

tom the rapid torrent gathered in places into black and sullen mountain lakes. As the bull turned to run I struck him just behind the shoulder; he reeled to the death-blow, but staggered gamely on a few rods into the forest before sinking to the ground, with my second bullet through his lungs.

Two or three days later than this I killed another bull, nearly as large, in the same patch of woods in which I had slain the first. A bear had been feeding on the carcass of the latter, and, after a vain effort to find his den, we determined to beat through the woods and try to start him up. Accordingly, Merrifield, the teamster, and myself took parallel courses some three hundred yards apart, and started at one end to walk through to the other. I doubt if the teamster much wished to meet a bear alone (while nothing would have given Merrifield more hearty and unaffected enjoyment than to have encountered an entire family), and he gradually edged in pretty close to me. Where the woods became pretty open I saw

him suddenly lift his rifle and fire, and immediately afterwards a splendid bull elk trotted past in front of me, evidently untouched, the teamster having missed. The elk ran to the other side of two trees that stood close together some seventy yards off, and stopped for a moment to look round. Kneeling down I fired at the only part of his body I could see between the two trees, and sent a bullet into his flank. Away he went, and I after, running in my moccasins over the moss and pine needles for all there was in me. If a wounded elk gets fairly started he will go at a measured trot for many hours, and even if mortally hurt may run twenty miles before falling; while at the same time he does not start off at full speed, and will often give an active hunter a chance for another shot as he turns and changes his course preparatory to taking a straight line. So I raced along after the elk at my very best speed for a few hundred feet, and then got another shot as he went across a little glade, injuring his hip somewhat.

This made it all right for me, and another hundred yards' burst took me up to where I was able to put a ball in a fatal spot, and the grand old fellow sank down and fell over on his side.

No sportsman can ever feel much keener pleasure and self-satisfaction than when, after a successful stalk and good shot, he walks up to a grand elk lying dead in the cool shade of the great evergreens, and looks at the massive and yet finely moulded form, and at the mighty antlers which are to serve in the future as the trophy and proof of his successful skill. Still-hunting the elk on the mountains is as noble a kind of sport as can well be imagined; there is nothing more pleasant and enjoyable, and at the same time it demands that the hunter shall bring into play many manly qualities. There have been few days of my hunting life that were so full of unalloyed happiness as were those spent on the Bighorn range. From morning till night I was on foot, in cool, bracing air, now moving silently through the vast, melan-

choly pine forests, now treading the brink of high, rocky precipices, always amid the most grand and beautiful scenery; and always after as noble and lordly game as is to be found in the Western world.

Since writing the above I killed an elk near my ranch; probably the last of his race that will ever be found in our neighborhood. It was just before the fall round-up. An old hunter, who was under some obligation to me, told me that he had shot a cow elk and had seen the tracks of one or two others not more than twenty-five miles off, in a place where the cattle rarely wandered. Such a chance was not to be neglected; and, on the first free day, one of my Elk-horn foremen, Will Dow by name, and myself, took our hunting horses and started off, accompanied by the ranch wagon, in the direction of the probable haunts of the doomed deer. Towards nightfall we struck a deep spring pool, near by the remains of an old Indian encampment. It was at the head of a great basin, several miles across, in which we believed

the game to lie. The wagon was halted and we pitched camp; there was plenty of dead wood, and soon the venison steaks were broiling over the coals raked from beneath the crackling cottonwood logs, while in the narrow valley the ponies grazed almost within the circle of the flickering fire-light. It was in the cool and pleasant month of September; and long after going to bed we lay awake under the blankets watching the stars that on clear nights always shine with such intense brightness over the lonely Western plains.

We were up and off by the gray of the morning. It was a beautiful hunting day; the sundogs hung in the red dawn; the wind hardly stirred over the crisp grass; and though the sky was cloudless yet the weather had that queer, smoky, hazy look that it is most apt to take on during the time of the Indian summer. From a high spur of the table-land we looked out far and wide over a great stretch of broken country, the brown of whose hills and valleys was varied every-

where by patches of dull red and vivid yellow, tokens that the trees were already putting on the dress with which they greet the mortal ripening of the year. The deep and narrow but smooth ravines running up towards the edges of the plateaus were heavily wooded, the bright green tree-tops rising to a height they rarely reach in the barren plains-country; and the rocky sides of the sheer gorges were clad with a thick growth of dwarfed cedars, while here and there the trailing Virginia creepers burned crimson among their sombre masses.

We hunted stealthily up-wind, across the line of the heavily timbered coulies. We soon saw traces of our quarry; old tracks at first, and then the fresh footprints of a single elk—a bull, judging by the size—which had come down to drink at a mirey alkali pool, its feet slipping so as to leave the marks of the false hoofs in the soft soil. We hunted with painstaking and noiseless care for many hours; at last as I led old Manitou up to look over the edge of a narrow

ravine, there was a crash and movement in the timber below me, and immediately afterwards I caught a glimpse of a great bull elk trotting up through the young trees as he gallantly breasted the steep hill-side opposite. When clear of the woods, and directly across the valley from me, he stopped and turned half round, throwing his head in the air to gaze for a moment at the intruder. My bullet struck too far back, but, nevertheless, made a deadly wound, and the elk went over the crest of the hill at a wild, plunging gallop. We followed the bloody trail for a quarter of a mile, and found him dead in a thicket. Though of large size, he yet had but small antlers, with few points.

CHAPTER X

OLD EPHRAIM

BUT few bears are found in the immediate neighborhood of my ranch; and though I have once or twice seen their tracks in the Bad Lands, I have never had any experience with the animals themselves except during the elk-hunting trip on the Bighorn Mountains, described in the preceding chapter.

The grizzly bear undoubtedly comes in the category of dangerous game, and is, perhaps the only animal in the United States that can be fairly so placed, unless we count the few jaguars found north of the Rio Grande. But the danger of hunting the grizzly has been greatly exaggerated, and the sport is certainly very much safer than it was at the beginning of this century. The first

hunters who came into contact with this great bear were men belonging to that hardy and adventurous class of backwoodsmen which had filled the wild country between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi. These men carried but one weapon: the long-barrelled, small-bored pea-rifle, whose bullets ran seventy to the pound, the amount of powder and lead being a little less than that contained in the cartridge of a thirty-two calibre Winchester. In the Eastern States almost all the hunting was done in the woodland; the shots were mostly obtained at short distance, and deer and black bear were the largest game; moreover, the pea-rifles were marvellously accurate for close range, and their owners were famed the world over for their skill as marksmen. Thus these rifles had so far proved plenty good enough for the work they had to do, and indeed had done excellent service as military weapons in the ferocious wars that the men of the border carried on with their Indian neighbors, and even in conflict with

more civilized foes, as at the battles of King's Mountain and New Orleans. But when the restless frontiersmen pressed out over the Western plains, they encountered in the grizzly a beast of far greater bulk and more savage temper than any of those found in the Eastern woods, and their small-bore rifles were utterly inadequate weapons with which to cope with him. It is small wonder that he was considered by them to be almost invulnerable, and extraordinarily tenacious of life. He would be a most unpleasant antagonist now to a man armed only with a thirty-two calibre rifle, that carried but a single shot and was loaded at the muzzle. A rifle, to be of use in this sport, should carry a ball weighing from half an ounce to an ounce. With the old pea-rifles the shot had to be in the eye or heart; and accidents to the hunter were very common. But the introduction of heavy breech-loading repeaters has greatly lessened the danger, even in the very few and far-off places where the grizzlies are as ferocious as formerly. For now-

adays these great bears are undoubtedly much better aware of the death-dealing power of men, and, as a consequence, much less fierce, than was the case with their forefathers, who so unhesitatingly attacked the early Western travellers and explorers. Constant contact with rifle-carrying hunters, for a period extending over many generations of bear-life, has taught the grizzly by bitter experience that man is his undoubted overlord, as far as fighting goes; and this knowledge has become an hereditary characteristic. No grizzly will assail a man now unprovoked, and one will almost always rather run than fight; though if he is wounded or thinks himself cornered he will attack his foes with a headlong, reckless fury that renders him one of the most dangerous of wild beasts. The ferocity of all wild animals depends largely upon the amount of resistance they are accustomed to meet with, and the quantity of molestation to which they are subjected.

The change in the grizzly's character dur-

ing the last half century has been precisely paralleled by the change in the characters of his northern cousin, the polar bear, and of the South African lion. When the Dutch and Scandinavian sailors first penetrated the Arctic seas, they were kept in constant dread of the white bear, who regarded a man as simply an erect variety of seal, quite as good eating as the common kind. The records of these early explorers are filled with examples of the ferocious and man-eating propensities of the polar bears; but in the accounts of most of the later Arctic expeditions they are portrayed as having learned wisdom, and being now most anxious to keep out of the way of the hunters. A number of my sporting friends have killed white bears, and none of them were ever even charged. And in South Africa the English sportsmen and Dutch Boers have taught the lion to be a very different creature from what it was when the first white man reached that continent. If the Indian tiger had been a native of the United States, it would now be one

of the most shy of beasts. Of late years our estimate of the grizzly's ferocity has been lowered; and we no longer accept the tales of uneducated hunters as being proper authority by which to judge it. But we should make a parallel reduction in the cases of many foreign animals and their describers. Take, for example, that purely melodramatic beast, the North African lion, as portrayed by Jules Gérard, who bombastically describes himself as "le tueur des lions." Gérard's accounts are self-evidently in large part fictitious, while if true they would prove less for the bravery of the lion than for the phenomenal cowardice, incapacity, and bad marksmanship of the Algerian Arabs. Doubtless Gérard was a great hunter; but so is many a Western plainsman, whose account of the grizzlies he has killed would be wholly untrustworthy. Take for instance the following from page 223 of "La Chasse au Lion": "The inhabitants had assembled one day to the number of two or three hundred with the object of killing (the lion) or driving

it out of the country. The attack took place at sunrise; at mid-day five hundred cartridges had been expended; the Arabs carried off one of their number dead and six wounded, and the lion remained master of the field of battle." Now if three hundred men could fire five hundred shots at a lion without hurting him, it merely shows that they were wholly incapable of hurting any thing, or else that M. Gérard was more expert with the long-bow than with the rifle. Gérard's whole book is filled with equally preposterous nonsense; yet a great many people seriously accept this same book as trustworthy authority for the manners and ferocity of the North African lion. It would be quite as sensible to accept M. Jules Verne's stories as being valuable contributions to science. A good deal of the lion's reputation is built upon just such stuff.

How the prowess of the grizzly compares with that of the lion or tiger would be hard to say; I have never shot either of the latter myself, and my brother, who has killed

tigers in India, has never had a chance at a grizzly. Any one of the big bears we killed on the mountains would, I should think, have been able to make short work of either a lion or a tiger; for the grizzly is greatly superior in bulk and muscular power to either of the great cats, and its teeth are as large as theirs, while its claws, though blunter, are much longer; nevertheless, I believe that a lion or a tiger would be fully as dangerous to a hunter or other human being, on account of the superior speed of its charge, the lightning-like rapidity of its movements, and its apparently sharper senses. Still, after all is said, the man should have a thoroughly trust-worthy weapon and a fairly cool head, who would follow into his own haunts and slay grim Old Ephraim.

A grizzly will only fight if wounded or cornered, or, at least, if he thinks himself cornered. If a man by accident stumbles on to one close up, he is almost certain to be attacked really more from fear than from any other motive; exactly the same reason

that makes a rattlesnake strike at a passer-by. I have personally known of but one instance of a grizzly turning on a hunter before being wounded. This happened to a friend of mine, a Californian ranchman, who, with two or three of his men, was following a bear that had carried off one of his sheep. They got the bear into a cleft in the mountain from which there was no escape, and he suddenly charged back through the line of his pursuers, struck down one of the horsemen, seized the arm of the man in his jaws and broke it as if it had been a pipe-stem, and was only killed after a most lively fight, in which, by repeated charges, he at one time drove every one of his assailants off the field.

But two instances have come to my personal knowledge where a man has been killed by a grizzly. One was that of a hunter at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains who had chased a large bear and finally wounded him. The animal turned at once and came straight at the man, whose second shot missed. The bear then closed and passed

on, after striking only a single blow; yet that one blow, given with all the power of its thick, immensely muscular forearm, armed with nails as strong as so many hooked steel spikes, tore out the man's collar-bone and snapped through three or four ribs. He never recovered from the shock, and died that night.

The other instance occurred to a neighbor of mine—who has a small ranch on the Little Missouri—two or three years ago. He was out on a mining trip, and was prospecting with two other men near the headwater of the Little Missouri, in the Black Hills country. They were walking down along the river, and came to a point of land, thrust out into it, which was densely covered with brush and fallen timber. Two of the party walked round by the edge of the stream; but the third, a German, and a very powerful fellow, followed a well-beaten game trail, leading through the bushy point. When they were some forty yards apart the two men heard an agonized shout from the

German, and at the same time the loud coughing growl, or roar, of a bear. They turned just in time to see their companion struck a terrible blow on the head by a grizzly, which must have been roused from its lair by his almost stepping on it; so close was it that he had no time to fire his rifle, but merely held it up over his head as a guard. Of course it was struck down, the claws of the great brute at the same time shattering his skull like an egg-shell. Yet the man staggered on some ten feet before he fell; but when he did he never spoke or moved again. The two others killed the bear after a short, brisk struggle, as he was in the midst of a most determined charge.

In 1872, near Fort Wingate, New Mexico, two soldiers of a cavalry regiment came to their death at the claws of a grizzly bear. The army surgeon who attended them told me the particulars, as far as they were known. The men were mail carriers, and one day did not come in at the appointed time. Next day, a relief party was sent out

to look for them, and after some search found the bodies of both, as well as that of one of the horses. One of the men still showed signs of life; he came to his senses before dying, and told the story. They had seen a grizzly and pursued it on horseback, with their Spencer rifles. On coming close, one had fired into its side, when it turned with marvellous quickness for so large and unwieldy an animal, and struck down the horse, at the same time inflicting a ghastly wound on the rider. The other man dismounted and came up to the rescue of his companion. The bear then left the latter and attacked the other. Although hit by the bullet, it charged home and threw the man down, and then lay on him and deliberately bit him to death, while his groans and cries were frightful to hear. Afterward it walked off into the bushes without again offering to molest the already mortally wounded victim of its first assault.

At certain times the grizzly works a good deal of havoc among the herds of the stock-

men. A friend of mine, a ranchman in Montana, told me that one fall bears became very plenty around his ranches, and caused him severe loss, killing with ease even full-grown beef-steers. But one of them once found his intended quarry too much for him. My friend had a stocky, rather vicious range stallion, which had been grazing one day near a small thicket of bushes, and, towards evening, came galloping in with three or four gashes in his haunch, that looked as if they had been cut with a dull axe. The cowboys knew at once that he had been assailed by a bear, and rode off to the thicket near which he had been feeding. Sure enough a bear, evidently in a very bad temper, sallied out as soon as the thicket was surrounded, and, after a spirited fight and a succession of charges, was killed. On examination, it was found that his under jaw was broken, and part of his face smashed in, evidently by the stallion's hoofs. The horse had been feeding when the bear leaped out at him but failed to kill at the first stroke; then the horse

lashed out behind, and not only freed himself, but also severely damaged his opponent.

Doubtless, the grizzly could be hunted to advantage with dogs, which would not, of course, be expected to seize him, but simply to find and bay him, and distract his attention by barking and nipping. Occasionally a bear can be caught in the open and killed with the aid of horses. But nine times out of ten the only way to get one is to put on moccasins and still-hunt it in its own haunts, shooting it at close quarters. Either its tracks should be followed until the bed wherein it lies during the day is found, or a given locality in which it is known to exist should be carefully beaten through, or else a bait should be left out and a watch kept on it to catch the bear when he has come to visit it.

For some days after our arrival on the Bighorn range we did not come across any grizzly.

Although it was still early in September,

the weather was cool and pleasant, the nights being frosty; and every two or three days there was a flurry of light snow, which rendered the labor of tracking much more easy. Indeed, throughout our stay on the mountains, the peaks were snow-capped almost all the time. Our fare was excellent, consisting of elk venison, mountain grouse, and small trout; the last caught in one of the beautiful little lakes that lay almost up by timber line. To us, who had for weeks been accustomed to make small fires from dried brush, or from sage-brush roots, which we dug out of the ground, it was a treat to sit at night before the roaring and crackling pine logs; as the old teamster quaintly put it, we had at last come to a land "where the wood grew on trees." There were plenty of black-tail deer in the woods, and we came across a number of bands of cow and calf elk, or of young bulls; but after several days' hunting, we were still without any head worth taking home, and had seen no sign of grizzly, which was the game we were especially anxious to kill; for

neither Merrifield nor I had ever seen a wild bear alive.

Sometimes we hunted in company; sometimes each of us went out alone; the teamster, of course, remaining in to guard camp and cook. One day we had separated; I reached camp early in the afternoon, and waited a couple of hours before Merrifield put in an appearance.

At last I heard a shout—the familiar long-drawn *Eikoh-h-h* of the cattle-men,—and he came in sight galloping at speed down an open glade, and waving his hat, evidently having had good luck; and when he reined in his small, wiry, cow-pony, we saw that he had packed behind his saddle the fine, glossy pelt of a black bear. Better still, he announced that he had been off about ten miles to a perfect tangle of ravines and valleys where bear sign was very thick; and not of black bear either but of grizzly. The black bear (the only one we got on the mountains) he had run across by accident, while riding up a valley in which there was

a patch of dead timber grown up with berry bushes. He noticed a black object which he first took to be a stump; for during the past few days we had each of us made one or two clever stalks up to charred logs which our imagination converted into bears. On coming near, however, the object suddenly took to its heels; he followed over frightful ground at the pony's best pace, until it stumbled and fell down. By this time he was close on the bear, which had just reached the edge of the wood. Picking himself up, he rushed after it, hearing it growling ahead of him; after running some fifty yards the sound stopped, and he stood still listening. He saw and heard nothing, until he happened to cast his eyes upwards, and there was the bear, almost overhead, and about twenty-five feet up a tree; and in as many seconds afterwards it came down to the ground with a bounce, stone dead. It was a young bear, in its second year, and had probably never before seen a man, which accounted for the ease with which it was

treed and taken. One minor result of the encounter was to convince Merrifield—the list of whose faults did not include lack of self-confidence—that he could run down any bear; in consequence of which idea we on more than one subsequent occasion went through a good deal of violent exertion.

Merrifield's tale made me decide to shift camp at once, and go over to the spot where the bear-tracks were so plenty. Next morning we were off, and by noon pitched camp by a clear brook, in a valley with steep, wooded sides, but with good feed for the horses in the open bottom. We rigged the canvas wagon sheet into a small tent, sheltered by the trees from the wind, and piled great pine logs near by where we wished to place the fire; for a night camp in the sharp fall weather is cold and dreary unless there is a roaring blaze of flame in front of the tent.

That afternoon we again went out, and I shot a fine bull elk. I came home alone toward nightfall, walking through a reach of

burnt forest, where there was nothing but charred tree-trunks and black mould. When nearly through it I came across the huge, half-human footprints of a great grizzly, which must have passed by within a few minutes. It gave me rather an eerie feeling in the silent, lonely woods, to see for the first time the unmistakable proofs that I was in the home of the mighty lord of the wilderness. I followed the tracks in the fading twilight until it became too dark to see them any longer, and then shouldered my rifle and walked back to camp.

That evening we almost had a visit from one of the animals we were after. Several times we had heard at night the musical calling of the bull elk—a sound to which no writer has as yet done justice. This particular night, when we were in bed and the fire was smouldering, we were roused by a ruder noise—a kind of grunting or roaring whine, answered by the frightened snorts of the ponies. It was a bear which had evidently not seen the fire, as it came from behind the

bank, and had probably been attracted by the smell of the horses. After it made out what we were it stayed round a short while, again uttered its peculiar roaring grunt, and went off; we had seized our rifles and had run out into the woods, but in the darkness could see nothing; indeed it was rather lucky we did not stumble across the bear, as he could have made short work of us when we were at such a disadvantage.

Next day we went off on a long tramp through the woods and along the sides of the canyons. There were plenty of berry bushes growing in clusters; and all around these there were fresh tracks of bear. But the grizzly is also a flesh-eater, and has a great liking for carrion. On visiting the place where Merrifield had killed the black bear, we found that the grizzlies had been there before us, and had utterly devoured the carcass, with cannibal relish. Hardly a scrap was left, and we turned our steps toward where lay the bull elk I had killed. It was quite late in the afternoon when we

reached the place. A grizzly had evidently been at the carcass during the preceding night, for his great footprints were in the ground all around it, and the carcass itself was gnawed and torn, and partially covered with earth and leaves—for the grizzly has a curious habit of burying all of his prey that he does not at the moment need. A great many ravens had been feeding on the body, and they wheeled about over the tree tops above us, uttering their barking croaks.

The forest was composed mainly of what are called ridge-pole pines, which grow close together, and do not branch out until the stems are thirty or forty feet from the ground. Beneath these trees we walked over a carpet of pine needles, upon which our moccasined feet made no sound. The woods seemed vast and lonely, and their silence was broken now and then by the strange noises always to be heard in the great forests, and which seem to mark the sad and everlasting unrest of the wilderness. We climbed up along the trunk of a dead tree

which had toppled over until its upper branches struck in the limb crotch of another, that thus supported it at an angle half-way in its fall. When above the ground far enough to prevent the bear's smelling us, we sat still to wait for his approach; until, in the gathering gloom, we could no longer see the sights of our rifles, and could but dimly make out the carcass of the great elk. It was useless to wait longer; and we clambered down and stole out to the edge of the woods. The forest here covered one side of a steep, almost canyon-like ravine, whose other side was bare except of rock and sage-brush. Once out from under the trees there was still plenty of light, although the sun had set, and we crossed over some fifty yards to the opposite hill-side, and crouched down under a bush to see if perchance some animal might not also leave the cover. To our right the ravine sloped downward toward the valley of the Bighorn River, and far on its other side we could catch a glimpse of the great main chain of the Rockies, their

snow peaks glinting crimson in the light of the set sun. Again we waited quietly in the growing dusk until the pine trees in our front blended into one dark, frowning mass. We saw nothing; but the wild creatures of the forest had begun to stir abroad. The owls hooted dismally from the tops of the tall trees, and two or three times a harsh wailing cry, probably the voice of some lynx or wolverine, arose from the depths of the woods. At last, as we were rising to leave, we heard the sound of the breaking of a dead stick, from the spot where we knew the carcass lay. It was a sharp, sudden noise, perfectly distinct from the natural creaking and snapping of the branches; just such a sound as would be made by the tread of some heavy creature. "Old Ephraim" had come back to the carcass. A minute afterward, listening with strained ears, we heard him brush by some dry twigs. It was entirely too dark to go in after him; but we made up our minds that on the morrow he should be ours.

Early next morning we were over at the elk carcass, and, as we expected, found that the bear had eaten his fill at it during the night. His tracks showed him to be an immense fellow, and were so fresh that we doubted if he had left long before we arrived; and we made up our minds to follow him up and try to find his lair. The bears that lived on these mountains had evidently been little disturbed; indeed, the Indians and most of the white hunters are rather chary of meddling with "Old Ephraim," as the mountain men style the grizzly, unless they get him at a disadvantage; for the sport is fraught with some danger and but small profit. The bears thus seemed to have very little fear of harm, and we thought it likely that the bed of the one who had fed on the elk would not be far away.

My companion was a skilful tracker, and we took up the trail at once. For some distance it led over the soft, yielding carpet of moss and pine needles, and the footprints

were quite easily made out, although we could follow them but slowly; for we had, of course, to keep a sharp look-out ahead and around us as we walked noiselessly on in the sombre half-light always prevailing under the great pine trees, through whose thickly interlacing branches stray but few beams of light, no matter how bright the sun may be outside. We made no sound ourselves, and every little sudden noise sent a thrill through me as I peered about with each sense on the alert. Two or three of the ravens that we had scared from the carcass flew overhead, croaking hoarsely; and the pine tops moaned and sighed in the slight breeze—for pine trees seem to be ever in motion, no matter how light the wind.

After going a few hundred yards the tracks turned off on a well-beaten path made by the elk; the woods were in many places cut up by these game trails, which had often become as distinct as ordinary foot-paths. The beast's footprints were perfectly plain in the dust, and he had lumbered along up

the path until near the middle of the hillside, where the ground broke away and there were hollows and boulders. Here there had been a windfall, and the dead trees lay among the living, piled across one another in all directions; while between and around them sprouted up a thick growth of young spruces and other evergreens. The trail turned off into the tangled thicket, within which it was almost certain we would find our quarry. We could still follow the tracks, by the slight scrapes of the claws on the bark, or by the bent and broken twigs; and we advanced with noiseless caution, slowly climbing over the dead tree trunks and upturned stumps, and not letting a branch rustle or catch on our clothes. When in the middle of the thicket we crossed what was almost a breastwork of fallen logs, and Merrifield, who was leading, passed by the upright stem of a great pine. As soon as he was by it he sank suddenly on one knee, turning half round, his face fairly aflame with excitement; and as I strode past him, with my rifle at

the ready, there, not ten steps off, was the great bear, slowly rising from his bed among the young spruces. He had heard us, but apparently hardly knew exactly where or what we were, for he reared up on his haunches sideways to us. Then he saw us and dropped down again on all fours, the shaggy hair on his neck and shoulders seeming to bristle as he turned towards us. As he sank down on his forefeet I had raised the rifle; his head was bent slightly down, and when I saw the top of the white bead fairly between his small, glittering, evil eyes, I pulled trigger. Half-rising up, the huge beast fell over on his side in the death throes, the ball having gone into his brain, striking as fairly between the eyes as if the distance had been measured by a carpenter's rule.

The whole thing was over in twenty seconds from the time I caught sight of the game; indeed, it was over so quickly that the grizzly did not have time to show fight at all or come a step toward us. It was the first I had ever seen, and I felt not a little proud,

as I stood over the great brindled bulk, which lay stretched out at length in the cool shade of the evergreens. He was a monstrous fellow, much larger than any I have seen since, whether alive or brought in dead by the hunters. As near as we could estimate (for of course we had nothing with which to weigh more than very small portions) he must have weighed about twelve hundred pounds, and though this is not as large as some of his kind are said to grow in California, it is yet a very unusual size for a bear. He was a good deal heavier than any of our horses; and it was with the greatest difficulty that we were able to skin him. He must have been very old, his teeth and claws being all worn down and blunted; but nevertheless he had been living in plenty, for he was as fat as a prize hog, the layers on his back being a finger's length in thickness. He was still in the summer coat, his hair being short, and in color a curious brindled brown, somewhat like that of certain bulldogs; while all the bears we shot afterward

had the long thick winter fur, cinnamon or yellowish brown. By the way, the name of this bear has reference to its character and not to its color, and should, I suppose, be properly spelt grisly—in the sense of horrible, exactly as we speak of a "grisly spectre" —and not grizzly; but perhaps the latter way of spelling it is too well established to be now changed.

In killing dangerous game steadiness is more needed than good shooting. No game is dangerous unless a man is close up, for nowadays hardly any wild beast will charge from a distance of a hundred yards, but will rather try to run off; and if a man is close it is easy enough for him to shoot straight if he does not lose his head. A bear's brain is about the size of a pint bottle; and any one can hit a pint bottle off-hand at thirty or forty feet. I have had two shots at bears at close quarters, and each time I fired into the brain, the bullet in one case striking fairly between the eyes, as told above, and in the other going in between the

eye and ear. A novice at this kind of sport will find it best and safest to keep in mind the old Norse viking's advice in reference to a long sword: "If you go in close enough your sword will be long enough." If a poor shot goes in close enough he will find that he shoots straight enough.

I was very proud over my first bear; but Merrifield's chief feeling seemed to be disappointment that the animal had not had time to show fight. He was rather a reckless fellow, and very confident in his own skill with the rifle; and he really did not seem to have any more fear of the grizzlies than if they had been so many jack-rabbits. I did not at all share his feelings, having a hearty respect for my foes' prowess, and in following and attacking them always took all possible care to get the chances on my side. Merrifield was sincerely sorry that we never had to stand a regular charge; while on this trip we killed five grizzlies with seven bullets, and except in the case of the she and cub, spoken of further on, each was shot

about as quickly as it got sight of us. The last one we got was an old male, which was feeding on an elk carcass. We crept up to within about sixty feet, and as Merrifield had not yet killed a grizzly purely to his own gun, and I had killed three, I told him to take the shot. He at once whispered gleefully: "I'll break his leg, and we'll see what he'll do!" Having no ambition to be a participator in the antics of a three-legged bear, I hastily interposed a most emphatic veto; and with a rather injured air he fired, the bullet going through the neck just back of the head The bear fell to the shot, and could not get up from the ground, dying in a few minutes; but first he seized his left wrist in his teeth and bit clean through it, completely separating the bones of the paw and arm. Although a smaller bear than the big one I first shot, he would probably have proved a much more ugly foe, for he was less unwieldy, and had much longer and sharper teeth and claws. I think that if my companion had merely broken the beast's leg

he would have had his curiosity as to its probable conduct more than gratified.

We tried eating the grizzly's flesh but it was not good, being coarse and not well flavored; and besides, we could not get over the feeling that it had belonged to a carrion feeder. The flesh of the little black bear, on the other hand, was excellent; it tasted like that of a young pig. Doubtless, if a young grizzly, which had fed merely upon fruits, berries, and acorns, was killed, its flesh would prove good eating; but even then, it would probably not be equal to a black bear.

A day or two after the death of the big bear, we went out one afternoon on horseback, intending merely to ride down to see a great canyon lying some six miles west of our camp; indeed, we went more to look at the scenery than for any other reason, though, of course, neither of us ever stirred out of camp without his rifle. We rode down the valley in which we had camped, through alternate pine groves and open glades, until we reached the canyon, and then skirted its

brink for a mile or so. It was a great chasm, many miles in length, as if the table-land had been rent asunder by some terrible and unknown force; its sides were sheer walls of rock, rising three or four hundred feet straight up in the air, and worn by the weather till they looked like the towers and battlements of some vast fortress. Between them at the bottom was a space, in some places nearly a quarter of a mile wide, in others very narrow, through whose middle foamed a deep, rapid torrent of which the sources lay far back among the snow-topped mountains around Cloud Peak. In this valley, dark-green, sombre pines stood in groups, stiff and erect; and here and there among them were groves of poplar and cottonwood, with slender branches and trembling leaves, their bright green already changing to yellow in the sharp fall weather. We went down to where the mouth of the canyon opened out, and rode our horses to the end of a great jutting promontory of rock, thrust out into the plain; and in the cold,

clear air we looked far over the broad valley of the Bighorn as it lay at our very feet, walled in on the other side by the distant chain of the Rocky Mountains.

Turning our horses, we rode back along the edge of another canyon-like valley, with a brook flowing down its centre, and its rocky sides covered with an uninterrupted pine forest—the place of all others in whose inaccessible wildness and ruggedness a bear would find a safe retreat. After some time we came to where other valleys, with steep, grass-grown sides, covered with sage-brush, branched out from it, and we followed one of these out. There was plenty of elk sign about, and we saw several black-tail deer. These last were very common on the mountains, but we had not hunted them at all, as we were in no need of meat. But this afternoon we came across a buck with remarkably fine antlers, and accordingly I shot it, and we stopped to cut off and skin out the horns, throwing the reins over the heads of the horses and leaving them to graze by

themselves. The body lay near the crest of one side of a deep valley, or ravine, which headed up on the plateau a mile to our left. Except for scattered trees and bushes the valley was bare; but there was heavy timber along the crests of the hills on its opposite side. It took some time to fix the head properly, and we were just ending when Merrifield sprang to his feet and exclaimed: "Look at the bears!" pointing down into the valley below us. Sure enough there were two bears (which afterwards proved to be an old she and a nearly full-grown cub) travelling up the bottom of the valley, much too far off for us to shoot. Grasping our rifles and throwing off our hats we started off as hard as we could run, diagonally down the hill-side, so as to cut them off. It was some little time before they saw us, when they made off at a lumbering gallop up the valley. It would seem impossible to run into two grizzlies in the open, but they were going up hill and we down, and moreover the old one kept stopping. The cub would

forge ahead and could probably have escaped us, but the mother now and then stopped to sit up on her haunches and look round at us, when the cub would run back to her. The upshot was that we got ahead of them, when they turned and went straight up one hill-side as we ran straight down the other behind them. By this time I was pretty nearly done out, for running along the steep ground through the sage-brush was most exhausting work; and Merrifield kept gaining on me and was well in front. Just as he disappeared over a bank, almost at the bottom of the valley, I tripped over a bush and fell full-length. When I got up I knew I could never make up the ground I had lost, and besides, could hardly run any longer; Merrifield was out of sight below, and the bears were laboring up the steep hill-side directly opposite and about three hundred yards off, so I sat down and began to shoot over Merrifield's head, aiming at the big bear. She was going very steadily and in a straight line, and each bullet sent up a puff of dust where

it struck the dry soil, so that I could keep correcting my aim; and the fourth ball crashed into the old bear's flank. She lurched heavily forward, but recovered herself and reached the timber, while Merrifield, who had put on a spurt, was not far behind.

I toiled up the hill at a sort of trot, fairly gasping and sobbing for breath; but before I got to the top I heard a couple of shots and a shout. The old bear had turned as soon as she was in the timber, and came towards Merrifield, but he gave her the death wound by firing into her chest, and then shot at the young one, knocking it over. When I came up he was just walking towards the latter to finish it with the revolver, but it suddenly jumped up as lively as ever and made off at a great pace—for it was nearly full-grown. It was impossible to fire where the tree trunks were so thick, but there was a small opening across which it would have to pass, and collecting all my energies I made a last run, got into position, and covered the opening with my rifle.

The instant the bear appeared I fired, and it turned a dozen somersaults down-hill, rolling over and over; the ball had struck it near the tail and had ranged forward through the hollow of the body. Each of us had thus given the fatal wound to the bear into which the other had fired the first bullet. The run, though short, had been very sharp, and over such awful country that we were completely fagged out, and could hardly speak for lack of breath. The sun had already set, and it was too late to skin the animals; so we merely dressed them, caught the ponies—with some trouble, for they were frightened at the smell of the bear's blood on our hands,—and rode home through the darkening woods. Next day we brought the teamster and two of the steadiest pack-horses to the carcasses, and took the skins into camp.

The feed for the horses was excellent in the valley in which we were camped, and the rest after their long journey across the plains did them good. They had picked up wonderfully in condition during our stay on

the mountains; but they were apt to wander very far during the night, for there were so many bears and other wild beasts around that they kept getting frightened and running off. We were very loath to leave our hunting grounds, but time was pressing, and we had already many more trophies than we could carry; so one cool morning when the branches of the evergreens were laden with the feathery snow that had fallen overnight, we struck camp and started out of the mountains, each of us taking his own bedding behind his saddle, while the pack-ponies were loaded down with bearskins, elk and deer antlers, and the hides and furs of other game. In single file we moved through the woods, and across the canyons to the edge of the great table-land, and then slowly down the steep slope to its foot, where we found our canvas-topped wagon; and next day saw us setting out on our long journey homewards, across the three hundred weary miles of treeless and barren-looking plains country.

Last spring, since the above was written,

a bear killed a man not very far from my ranch. It was at the time of the floods. Two hunters came down the river, by our ranch, on a raft, stopping to take dinner. A score or so of miles below, as we afterwards heard from the survivor, they landed, and found a bear in a small patch of brushwood. After waiting in vain for it to come out, one of the men rashly attempted to enter the thicket, and was instantly struck down by the beast, before he could so much as fire his rifle. It broke in his skull with a blow of its great paw, and then seized his arm in its jaws, biting through and through in three places, but leaving the body and retreating into the bushes as soon as the unfortunate man's companion approached. We did not hear of the accident until too late to go after the bear, as we were just about starting to join the spring round-up.

ADDENDUM

In speaking of the trust antelope place in their eye-sight as a guard against danger, I do not mean to imply that their noses are not also very acute; it is as important with them as with all other game to prevent their getting the hunter's wind. So with deer; while their eyes are not as sharp as those of big-horn and prong-horn, they are yet quite keen enough to make it necessary for the still-hunter to take every precaution to avoid being seen.

Although with us antelope display the most rooted objection to entering broken or wooded ground, yet a friend of mine, whose experience in the hunting-field is many times as great as my own, tells me that in certain parts of the country they seem by preference to go among the steepest and roughest places (of course, in so doing, be-

ing obliged to make vertical as well as horizontal leaps), and even penetrate into thick woods. Indeed, no other species seems to show such peculiar "freakiness" of character, both individually and locally.

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